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PRACTICAL, FAMILIAR AND DOCTRINAL

SERMONS.

VOL. II.

PRACTICAL, FAMILIAR AND DOCTRINAL

SERMONS,

DESIGNED FOR

PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC INSTRUCTION.

BY THE REV. EDWARD COOPER,
RECTOR OF HAMSTALL-RIDWARE AND OF YOXALL IN THE
COUNTY OF STAFFORD, AND LATE FELLOW OF ALL-
SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

The Holy Spirit the Comforter,

JOHN, xiv. 16.

And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth. - - - - - 17

SERMON II.

Certainty of Sin finding us out.

NUMBERS, xxxii. 23.

Be sure your Sin will find you out. - - - - - 25

SERMON III.

The Wedding-Garment.

MATTHEW, xxii. 11, 12, 13.

And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a man, which had not on a Wedding-Garment. And he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-Garment? And he was speechless. Then said the King to the Servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. - - - 34

SERMON IV.

Youth solemnly admonished.

ECCLESIASTES, xi. 9.

Rejoice, O Young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy Youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment. 43

SERMON V.

God's tender Expostulation with Young Persons.

JEREMIAH, iii. 4.

Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of my Youth ? - - - - 52

SERMON VI.

The Word of the Lord Glorified.

2 THESSALONIANS, iii. 1.

Finally, Brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you. 60

SERMON VII.

The Circumcision of the Heart.

ROMANS, ii. 28, 29.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ; neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit and not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men, but of God. - - - - 69

SERMON VIII.

Nature and Necessity of Regeneration.

JOHN, iii. 7.

Marvel not, that I said unto Thee, ye must be born again. 79

SERMON IX.

Adoption the Fruit of Faith and Regeneration.

JOHN, i. 12, 13.

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name : which were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God. - 90

SERMON X.

The Love of God in Redemption.

JOHN, iii. 16.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life. - - - - 100

SERMON XI.

The Call of the Gospel to Sinners.

EPHESIANS, v. 14.

Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light. - - 109

SERMON XII.

Christ's Invitation to the Heavy-laden.

MATTHEW, xi. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you Rest. - - - - 117

SERMON XIII.

The Sin and Guilt of not obeying the Gospel.

1 PETER, iv. 17.

What shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God. - - - - 127

SERMON XIV.

Saving Faith through the Word.

JOHN, xvii. 20.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word. - - - 136

SERMON XV.

Difference between Christ's Peace and the World's Peace.

JOHN, xvi. 27.

Peace I leave with you ; my Peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. - - - 146

SERMON XVI.

Conversion from Sin, the Great Blessing of the Gospel.

ACTS, iii. 26.

Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. - - - 154

SERMON XVII.

Esau despising his Birth-right.

HEBREWS, xii. 17.

For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected : for he found no Place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears. 164

SERMON XVIII.

The humble Enquirer after Wisdom Encouraged.

JAMES, i. 5, 6.

If any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally and upbraideth not : and it shall be given him. But let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering. - 175

SERMON XIX.

The acceptable Year and the Day of Vengeance.

ISAIAH lxi. 1, 2. in part.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me—to proclaim the Acceptable Year of the Lord, and the Day of Vengeance of our God. - - - 182

SERMON XX.

Connection between the Confidence and Character of the true Christian stated and illustrated.

ISAIAH, xxv. 9.

And it shall be said in that Day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him: we will be glad and rejoice in His Salvation. - - - 192

SERMON XXI.

Evil of Calumny and Prejudice exposed.

ACTS, xvii. part 6, and 7.

These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also: whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, that there is another King, one Jesus. - - - 201

SERMON XXII.

Converting Mercy a Pledge of persevering Grace.

ROMANS, v. 10.

For if when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life. - - - 212

SERMON XXIII.

On the Sin of Swearing.

MATTHEW, v. 35.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all. - - 231

SERMON XXIV.

. The Blessings of Redemption.

LUKE, i. 68, 69.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of Salvation for us, in the House of his Servant David. - - 232

SERMON XXV.

A Right State of Heart described and Enforced.

ACTS, viii. 21.

Thou hast neither Part nor Lot in this Matter : for thy Heart is not right in the Sight of God. - - 239

SERMON XXVI.

Importance of Reflecting on our natural State of Guilt and Corruption.

ISAIAH, li. 1.

Hearken to me, ye that follow after Righteousness, ye that seek the Lord : look unto the Rock whence ye are hewn, and to the Hole of the Pit, whence ye are digged. - 247

SERMON XXVII.

God glorified in the Sufferings of Christ.

JOHN, xii. 28.

Father, glorify thy Name. - - - 258

SERMON XXVIII.

Scriptural statement of the Doctrine of Justification,

ROMANS, iii. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. - - 268

SERMON XXIX.

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith only, Vindicated from the Charge of Encouraging Licentiousness.

ROMANS, iii. 31.

Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law. - - 290

SERMON XXX.

Scriptural Statement of the Doctrines of Human Corruption, and of the Renewal of the Heart to Holiness.

ECCLESIASTES, ix. 3.

The Heart of the Sons of Men is full of Evil. - 292

SERMON XXXI.

On the Gift of the Spirit,

JOHN, iv. 10.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the Gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. - - - 303

SERMON XXXII.

On the Danger of being Corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS, xi. 3.

But I fear lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ. - - 314

SERMON XXXIII.

Christ's Yoke an easy Yoke.

MATTHEW, xi. 30.

For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light. - 325

SERMON XXXIV.

Christ's Burden a Light Burden.

MATTHEW, xi. 30.

For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light. - 337

SERMON XXXV.

The Danger of a Worldly Spirit, Illustrated in the History of Lot.

GENESIS, xix. 29.

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt. - - - 347

SERMON XXXVI.

On the DESIGN and DUTIES of the SABBATH.

MARK, ii. 27.

And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath. - - 356

SERMON XXXVII.

On the Danger and Misery of Self Deception.

MATTHEW, xix. 16.

*And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master,
what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal
Life?* - - - - - 369

SERMON XXXVIII.

Christ the Beloved, and the Friend of his People.

SONG OF SOLOMON, v. 16.

*This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O Daughters of
Jerusalem.* - - - - - 383

SERMON XXXIX.

**The Sin and Danger of neglecting the great Salvation of
the Gospel.**

HEBREWS, ii. 3.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation? 398

SERMON XL.

The Life and Death of the Real Christian.

PHILIPPIANS, i. 21.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is Gain. - 409

SERMON XLI.

**The Duty of Surrendering Ourselves to God explained and
Enforced.**

ROMANS, xii. 1.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that
ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable
unto God, which is your reasonable service.* - 419

SERMON XLII.

Angels rejoicing over the Penitent Sinner.

LUKE, XV. 10.

Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one Sinner that repenteth. - 429

SERMON XLIII.

Consolation to the Afflicted.

ISAIAH, I. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant ; that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. - - - - - 439

SERMON XLIV.

Expostulation with Careless Sinners.

JONAH, I. 6.

What meanest thou, O sleeper ? Arise, call upon thy God ; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. 449

SERMON XLV.

The Grace of Christ Sufficient for his People.

2 CORINTHIANS, XII. 9.

My Grace is Sufficient for thee. - - - 458

SERMON XLVI.

Hezekiah's Fall considered and Applied.

2 CHRONICLES, XXXII. 31.

Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder, that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. - - - 471

SERMON XLVII.

The Duty of confessing Christ before Men.

MATTHEW, x. 32.

*Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I
confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 482*

SERMON XLVIII.

The advantages of Godliness, as to the Present Life.

1 TIMOTHY, iv. 8.

*Godliness is profitable unto all things, having Promise of
the Life that now is. - - - 495*

SERMON XLIX.

Earnestness in Religion, recommended and Enforced.

LUKE, xiii. 24.

*Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you,
shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. - 507*

SERMON L.

The Marks of True Faith, stated and explained. ●

2 CORINTHIANS, xiii. 5.

*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith : Prove
your own selves. - - - 520*

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

The Holy Spirit the Comforter.

JOHN, xiv. 16.

And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.

AS the Coming of the Messiah was the great promise of the Old Testament, so the Gift of the Spirit is the great promise of the New. Hence the Gospel is called "the ministration of the Spirit;" and the first gift which Christ on his ascension into Heaven bestowed on his Church, was the Gift of the Holy Ghost. There are many ways in which this Gift may be profitably contemplated. I shall select for our consideration that view of the Holy Spirit, which is set before us in the text. He is there represented under the title and character of *the Comforter*. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth." In three other places, in this same discourse, our Lord speaks of the Spirit by the same Title. He thrice calls him "*The Comforter*." Hence we might justly infer, that one part of the Spirit's office in our redemption, is to comfort them that mourn. And with this inference the whole tenor of Scripture agrees. Whatever peace, consolation, or joy we receive is expressly described to be the work and fruit of the Spirit. Do we abound in hope? It is "through the power of the Holy Spirit." Are we fill-

ed with joy? It is "with the Holy Ghost." Is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts? "It is by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Indeed the importance of the Spirit as a Comforter, may be strongly proved from the language of our Lord to his Apostles in another part of this discourse. He endeavors to reconcile them to the thoughts of his leaving them, by the assurance that it was for *their good* that he left them. "It is *expedient for you* that I go away." And why *expedient*? Because he adds, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart I will send him unto you."* The Benefits which they would derive from the presence of the Comforter with them, would be so great, as not only to compensate for the loss of Christ's personal presence, but even to surpass the benefits which they would receive from his continuance with them. Hitherto Christ himself had been their Comforter: but He would provide them with another Comforter, who should do even more than supply his place.

It shall be the object of this discourse, to set before you a plain and connected statement of the *way* in which the Holy Spirit discharges this part of his great office, and becomes our Comforter.

To this end I would first remind you of the nature of that Comfort which he gives: what it is, and in what it consists.

The Comfort which He gives, partakes of the nature of Him who gives it. The Gift resembles the Giver. He is *Divine* person, and the Comfort which he gives is *Divine*. It is such as God only can give: a comfort, which the world can neither give, nor take away. The Comforter also is a *Spirit*, and thus also the Comfort which He gives is *spiritual*. It is seated in the heart. It is shed abroad in the soul. It is inward and invisible. He is further, the *Spirit of Truth*. Thus the Comfort which he gives, is strictly agreeable to the word of God, which is Truth itself. Again, He is the *Spirit of Holiness*. So the Comfort which He gives is holy in its nature and tendency: it is found only in company with holiness, and operates in making and keeping holy those who partake of it. In other words, the Comfort which the Holy Spirit gives, is a real, substantial.

* John, xvi. 7.

heartfelt Comfort. It is such a Comfort as nothing else can give: an inward Comfort, which nothing outward can destroy or disturb. "For when He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" It is such a Comfort as is felt by a mind at peace with God and with itself. It is such a lively satisfying Comfort, as that man possesses, who can truly use these words, and from the heart can say, 'God is my friend and father. He is reconciled to me, and at peace with me. He will provide for me and protect me. All my concerns are in His hands. I leave myself to Him, to do what He pleases with me, assured that He will do what is best for me. I am thankful for the favors, which He bestows on me. I am contented with the portion, which He allows me. Whether He give or take away, I am resigned to his will; for I know that He careth for me, and will make all things work together for my good, for my final, everlasting good: the good of my soul, my salvation through eternity.' It need hardly be asked, whether the man, who can *truly* use this language, is not a happy man? Whether these are not feelings full of comfort: whether this is not a state of mind, in which true peace and blessedness are, if any where, to be found. Such however is the state of mind, which the Spirit, in discharging the important office of Comforter, produces and maintains.

Now, in bringing men to this state, the first step is to take away these false grounds of comfort, on which they naturally rest. These grounds will be different in different persons. Some place their confidence and seek their comfort in the world and worldly things. Their hearts and their treasure are here on earth. If their affairs prosper, and their corn, and wine, and oil increase; or, if they can enjoy themselves; and having much goods laid up for many years, can take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry; or if they can be admired and applauded by their fellow-creatures; or can gratify their ambitious desires and obtain a little power over others; then they are satisfied and happy. They have no higher ideas of comfort, than what these things can yield. They desire no other peace or joy, than what is to be found in the pursuit or the possession of them. Others, there are, who not being so entirely devoted to this world, and having some thoughts and desires about the world to come, have other grounds of comfort. They rest in the thoughts of their

own righteousness. Their comfort is that they are moral, or honest, or sober, and better than others : or that they come to church, and know the Scriptures, and attend to religious duties : or that they are kind, and useful, and charitable, and by their good works commend themselves to God, and shall surely be repaid for all they do here, by heaven hereafter. These are the thoughts to which they fly for refuge ; and in which they find their comfort and delight. But all these grounds of comfort are alike false and vain ; and before true peace can be obtained and felt, must be removed. Here then, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, begins his gracious work. He takes away these grounds of comfort. And how does He take them away ? By secretly convincing the soul of sin. The real cause why a man finds comfort in these things is, that he is ignorant of his own true state and character. He knows not his guilt and condemnation as a sinner. His conscience is asleep. He feels not his sins. He sees not his danger. But let his conscience be once awakened : let his eyes be opened ; and the case will be greatly altered. None of those things, on which he has hitherto rested with complacency, will any longer yield him the comfort which they used to do. Seeing himself, as in the sight of God, defiled and stained with sin, he is no longer satisfied with his own goodness. Instead of having a righteousness of his own, in which he may stand clothed and accepted before God, he now discovers himself to be naked and exposed to the Divine wrath. What then is become of his comfort ? The foundation on which he placed it, is taken away, and with it, the comfort also is gone. Having no more confidence in the flesh, he is uneasy and dissatisfied, and anxiously looks around for something else, on which he may ground his hopes and place his comfort. And what will the world and worldly things now do for him ? Will they yield him satisfaction ? Will they heal the wounded spirit ? Alas ! miserable comforters they are found to be. Their vanity is seen : their insufficiency is felt. The pleasures, the profits, the honors of the world, cannot silence the voice of conscience ; cannot satisfy the demands of the law ; cannot appease the wrath of God. And what comfort then can they now yield to the soul, which at length perceives its own true state, and dreads the judgment to which it stands

exposed ? It must now have some other ground of peace and hope, than what this vain unsatisfying world can furnish. Thus is the false peace broken. Thus does the Holy Spirit begin his gracious operation. Like a skilful physician, He has not healed the wound slightly ; but He has probed it, and laid it open to the quick. He has indeed given pain ; for thus to convince a man of his sins, and to deprive him of all his former grounds of comfort, is indeed a painful operation. But it has been done with a wise and with a merciful design : it has been done with a view of leading the soul to true peace and solid comfort. Nor has the Blessed Spirit undertaken more than He is able to accomplish. He has wounded, but He can also heal. He has broken but He can also bind up. He has caused grief and trouble, but He can also restore comfort to the mourners. And by what means does He effect this part of his heavenly work ? By revealing to the soul the only real foundation of peace and comfort, and by enabling it to fix and to build upon it ; “ and this foundation is Jesus Christ. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid.” Our Saviour, speaking of the Spirit to his Apostles, says, that “ He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you :” “ He shall testify of me :” and it is by thus testifying of Him, by taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them to men, that He carries on his office of “ the Comforter.” Having convinced the soul of sin, having thus taught it to feel its guilt and danger, He now leads it to see its cure and remedy. He sets before it Christ crucified as the only but all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. He bids it look with a believing hope, to this Almighty Saviour, for the removal of its guilt, and the recovery of its peace. He points Him out “ as the propitiation through faith in his blood, whom God has set forth for the remission of sins ;” and in whom alone the sinner can find pardon, peace and hope. Under this heavenly teaching, new light breaks in upon the soul. It had heard before of Jesus Christ : perhaps it had professed belief in his name, and had even rendered to him a formal service ; but now, it has far other and clearer views of Him. It discovers in Him a suitableness, which it never saw before. It sees that the salvation which the Gospel offers, is a salvation exactly fitted to its wants. With the Apostle it now learns to “ count all things but loss, for the excellency of the know-

ledge of Christ Jesus the Lord ;” and even to be willing “to suffer the loss of all things, that it may win Christ and be found in him, not having its own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by faith.”* So great is the change, which has been wrought in the soul, since the time that it trusted in its own righteousness, and supremely valued the things of this world.

But the work is not yet complete. False grounds of comfort have been removed. The only true foundation has been discovered. An anxious desire of being built on it has been excited. But one further step yet remains ; namely, actually to build on it, and to experience the comfort which belongs to it. Nor does the Comforter leave this work unfinished. He enables the soul to lay hold of, and to appropriate to itself, the blessed hopes set before it. He enables the soul to believe on Christ, and to rely on Him for the fulfilling of his promises to itself. In the course of this process, there may, by turns, be many doubts and fears. Light and darkness may alternately succeed. But hope in the end prevails ; faith gains ground, and peace is thus gradually restored to the soul : a peace totally unlike that which had been lost : a peace which passeth all understanding ; the legacy, which Christ has left to his Church ; and, as we have seen, the work and fruit of the Holy Spirit the Comforter.

The use which I would make of this subject, is one which the subject itself naturally suggests. I would use it for *our* comfort. Possibly some of you may be at this time under the leading and teaching of the Spirit of Truth, and yet may be ignorant that you are so. He may have convinced you of sin. By his secret work in your soul, He may have gradually brought you to think of yourselves, in a very different way, from what you used to think. An impression, of which perhaps you can give no clear and accurate account, has, by degrees, been made upon your heart ; and the effect has been that you find and feel yourself to be a sinner ; and such a sinner as you did not once suspect yourself to be. Many parts of your conduct, of which you formerly took little or no account ; nay, on which perhaps you once looked with

* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

satisfaction and complacency, you now perceive to have been sinful. You find much more to be required of you, than you formerly supposed. And thus, while the demands against you seem daily to be increasing, the wrath of God, and the terrors of a Judgment to come, appear to you far more serious things, than was wont to be the case. The consequence of all this inward experience is, that you are uneasy and distressed. You have lost your peace of mind. Your comfort is gone. Those things, which used to give you peace and comfort, no longer give you any. Perhaps you even perceive, that the very trusting in them, as you used to do, was in itself a sin. You therefore feel a dislike and an abhorrence of them ; and wonder that you could ever find pleasure or comfort in them. In the mean while, your worldly friends, not knowing what is passing in your heart, and totally mistaking the nature of your case, may be urging you to drive away your melancholy thoughts, and to seek the recovery of your peace in those very things, in pleasure, company, and business, where you feel that you can never find it. Nay, you yourself may greatly mistake your own case. You may perhaps be supposing, that all these things are against you ; that this conviction of sin, this fear of wrath and judgment, this loss of peace, this deprivation of former comforts, are but the beginnings of sorrows, the too probable proofs that God has forsaken you, and the certain intimations and earnestings of the wrath to come. May what has been said in this discourse help to undeceive you. May the Holy Spirit the Comforter make use of it, to forward his gracious work in your heart ; to shew you that this is indeed *His* work ; and that by these means He is gradually preparing you for that real, solid comfort, with which, in due time He will cheer and refresh your souls ! Instead then of being cast down, be thankful and rejoice. Be thankful that you have been brought to see the vanity of those foundations, on which you once were built. Be thankful that your false comforts are destroyed ; that the world is no longer your treasure ; that your own righteousness is no longer your trust. Rejoice in that there is a real treasure within your reach ; a sure rock, on which you may securely place your hopes. Follow the leadings of the Blessed Spirit. Listen to those cheering truths which He reveals to you in his holy Word. “ Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on Him, shall not be confounded." The Lord Jesus Christ is the Pearl of great price; the true invaluable Treasure. He is the Rock of Ages; the only sure Foundation. Lay hold of this Treasure. Build on this one Foundation. Hear what the gracious, heavenly Saviour himself declares to you, and to all like you. "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." If you are one of those, whose case has been here described, you are heavy-laden. You are laboring under a distressing sense of sin, under an anxious desire of finding some real, lasting consolation. Come then unto Him, who so tenderly calls you to Himself; who so freely offers to give you rest. He has already sent his Spirit into your heart to prepare the way for your coming to Him. May that Spirit further incline and help you to come! May He enable you with the heart, to believe on Jesus Christ, and so to make your peace with God! May He subdue your corruptions, purify your affections, enable you to fight manfully and successfully against the enemies of your salvation, and shed abroad the love of God in your souls! Thus may He fulfil in you his gracious work of love and consolation! May He bind up the broken heart, and heal the wounded Spirit; and as your heavenly Comforter, Sanctifier, and Friend, abide with you for ever!

SERMON II.

Certainty of Sin finding us out.

NUMBERS, xxxii. 23.

Be sure your Sin will find you out.

THERE is nothing which proves more ruinous to the souls of men, than the hope of being able to sin without incurring punishment. It is this hope, which first tempts them to commit sin, and afterwards keeps them from repenting of it. Did they feel assured that punishment would *certainly* follow the offence, fear would prevent them from committing it. After having committed it, were they but convinced that judgment would *surely* overtake them, they would at least be anxious to avert it. But resisting every assurance and all conviction of these things, they rush into sin without fear, and live in it without apprehension. Though liable every moment to be called into judgment, they feel no concern, or if a serious thought at times rises in their mind, they speedily dismiss it with the presumptuous idea that "*they shall escape at last.*" The greatest kindness then, that can be done to such persons, is to destroy their hope, to shew them their mistake, and to make them feel, that, continuing as they are, they most assuredly shall not escape at last. But it is the Lord alone, who can work these things. He only, can "convince of sin." He only can open the heart, and fix any deep impression there. He employs however his word, as an instrument in his hand, for accomplishing this gracious purpose. In an humble reliance therefore, on the teaching of his Spirit, we may proceed to the consideration of this passage, addressed by Moses to the Israelites, "Be sure your sin will find you out." The better to explain and enforce this solemn declaration, I shall shew

I. What is meant by our Sin finding us out.

II. The Certainty that it will do so.

By the expression *Our Sin*, we may, in the first place, understand any particular sin of which we may have been guilty.

ty ; any gross and single act of injustice, profaneness, licentiousness, falsehood, or the like, which at any time, may have been committed by us. But we must not confine the expression to this meaning ; for it more properly signifies all the collective sin of which we have been guilty ; the sin, as it were, of our whole lives. All our early and habitual transgressions of the Divine Law ; all our offences, at any time committed against God, our neighbor, or ourselves ; the evil words which we may have spoken : the wicked thoughts which we may have entertained ; our want of improvement of the talents entrusted to our keeping ; our unfaithfulness to our covenant engagements ; whatever we have done, that we ought not to have done, or whatever we have left undone that we ought to have done ;—these things all taken together form *our sin*. Now, in what sense is it said, that this *our sin will find us out* ? To understand the force of this expression, we must remember that sin necessarily brings with it, in its train, certain evil consequences. It entails them on the sinner. For a time he may not experience them ; he may seem to have avoided them, to have put himself out of their reach, to have escaped from their power ; but, at length, they will overtake him, and seize him. Sin has a demand against him. For a season, he may appear to elude the demand and to conceal himself from the search of his creditor. But at last he will *be found out*. His retreat will be discovered : payment will be urged, and the debt enforced. He will feel the consequences of his sin. More clearly then to see the meaning of this expression, we must enquire what these consequences are. When we understand what the sinner thus detected, feels and undergoes, we shall more distinctly perceive what is meant by his sin having *found him out*.

Now these consequences are three ; Fear, Shame, and Death. Sin necessarily brings these evils with it in its train. We need only look at the first sin, which was committed by man in the world, to see the way in which these three evils follow Sin. When our first parents had broken God's commandment, and had eaten the forbidden fruit ; what were the consequences of their transgression ? They were *afraid*, and hid themselves from the presence of God. They were *ashamed* and made themselves aprons. They became mortal and subject to *natural death* ; they lost their *spiritual life* ; they passed under the sentence of *eternal death*.

Thus, their sin "found them out." It found them out *speedily*. It overtook and seized on them *without delay*. But this is not necessarily the case. Men do not *always* feel the consequences of sin, so soon as they have committed it. They may sin, and yet have no *immediate alarm* on account of their sin. Their conscience may not be roused. Their fears may not be excited. They may entertain no apprehension of their guilt, nor be terrified at the judgment, to which they have exposed themselves.—Again, they may not *at once* be *ashamed* of what they have done. They may feel no distress of this kind at the thought of their sin. Shame generally springs from the idea that our sin is known to others. But men may have sinned so secretly; they may have taken such pains to hide their sin from other people, and, for the present, may so successfully prevent it from being discovered; as, on this account, to have no unpleasant feelings.—Further, They may not *immediately* feel any of the punishment of sin. Not only are their lives preserved; but their health and strength are continued; their worldly affairs prosper; no particular calamities befall them; no peculiar mark of God's displeasure against them appears. But because their sin has not yet "found them out," will it therefore never find them out? Because it has not yet overtaken them, will it therefore never overtake them? Far otherwise will be the case. "Evil pursues Sinners:" and whatever they may think or feel, their sin will one day find them out. A day is coming, in which conscience will be roused and their fear excited. Their sins however long forgotten or habitually unnoticed will be placed in order before them, and will strike terror into their soul. A day is coming in which they will be filled with *shame* and confusion of face. Their sins however secretly committed, or artfully concealed, will be brought to light: and conscious of their wickedness, they will long to hide their guilty heads. A day is coming, in which the *sentence* denounced against transgressors will at length be executed. Their judgment, though for a long time it linger, will linger no longer; their damnation will slumber no more. They will have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.—This then is what is meant by our sin finding us out. It will bring on us Fear, Shame, and Death. I go on to shew,

II. The Certainty that it will do so.* “Be sure your sin will find you out.” I have already noticed the proneness of men to presume that their sin will *not* find them out, as well as the ruinous consequences, which flow from this presumption. They think that they shall escape at last: therefore they sin on without fear. They have no anxiety on account of the sins already committed, nor any apprehension about those, which they are going to commit. But what ground have they for this vain and wicked presumption? Nothing can be more certain, than that their *sin will find them out*. That it will do so, we have the strongest possible assurance.

In the first place, the *Perfections of God* absolutely forbid that sin should go unpunished. God is *present* at *all times* and in *every place*. He *filleth* all in all. Nothing therefore can be hidden from him. No sin however secretly committed, or studiously concealed, is unseen by Him. He is also *perfect* in *Knowledge*, and knoweth all things. He therefore remembereth all things. Men forget their sins: but they cannot be forgotten by God. God is also *Holy*. He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity.” As such then He must hate sin. It must be infinitely offensive to Him. Further, God is most *Just*. He loveth Righteousness, and executeth Judgment. As a righteous Judge then, He cannot but be concerned to punish sin: for not to punish it would be unjust. It would not be to treat sin according to its deserts, which would be injustice. Besides, God is *True* and *Faithful* to his word. He is *Truth* itself and cannot lie. How is it possible then that He should not punish sin, for He hath declared that He will punish it, that He “will by no means clear the guilty.”† Put all these things together. God sees sin: He remembers sin: He hates sin: He cannot be just without punishing sin: and He has said that He will punish it. With what certainty do these Perfections of the Almighty declare, that a man’s sin will surely find him out. Only let us consider, that, to entertain the contrary presumption; to suppose that sin will escape unpunished, is in fact to strike at

* The Writer in this Division of the Discourse acknowledges with gratitude his obligations to the Skeleton of a Sermon on the same text in that valuable Work, “Helps to Composition,” by the Rev. Charles Simcox.

† Exodus, xxxiv. 7.

the root of the Divine Character, to deny one at least, if not all of the Glorious Perfections of the God-head. To say, that our sin will not find us out is to say, either that God does not see sin; or that He will forget it; or that He does not hate it; or that He is unjust; or that He will not keep his word. And which of these things will a man presume to say? Or which of them, if he did presume to say it, would be true? God, in his very nature must be infinite in all his Perfections; and so surely as He is so, so surely unrepented, unpardoned sin will not go unpunished.

In the second place, *the many remarkable Instances of sin being detected and punished in this world, strongly confirm the truth under consideration.* The Scriptures afford several examples of this kind. We have a very striking instance in the seventh chapter of the Book of Joshua. At the taking of the city of Jericho by the Israelites, a certain man among them, named Achan, contrary to the express command of God had taken to himself a part of the spoil of the place, and had buried it in the earth in the midst of his tent. He had conducted the matter with great secrecy and art; had used every precaution to prevent a discovery; and doubtless presumed, even if the commission of the theft should become known, that among so many thousands of people he should not be detected. But his presumptions were utterly vain. The Lord saw his iniquity, and brought it to light. He directed the lot to be cast, and it fell upon Achan; who being thus pointed out as the offender, was instantly put to death.—Take another instance from the fifth chapter of the second Book of Kings. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, under a false pretence, had obtained from Naaman the Syrian, two talents of silver, and two changes of raiment; and without his master's knowledge, had secretly conveyed them to the house. He thought to have escaped detection, and added a lie in order to hide his guilt. But lo! his sin found him out. The Lord, by his Spirit revealed the matter to the Prophet; and the leprosy, of which Naaman had been cured, was assigned as a punishment to Gehazi and his seed for ever.—Look next at the example of Ananias and Sapphira, in the New Testament.* They

* Acts, v. 1—11.

privily joined together in an impious design of making it appear that they had sold their possession for less than they really received for it. But did not their sin find them out? Did not God, in a most awful manner testify his knowledge of their sin, and his abhorrence of it? They both, one after the other fell down dead at the Apostle's foot.—These are some of the instances recorded in Scripture, of the remarkable way, in which sin has sometimes been found out, detected, and punished.—And have we not occasionally ourselves witnessed examples of the same kind? Cannot we recollect instances, in which God in a very unexpected and even wonderful manner has brought to light sins, which had been secretly committed, perhaps even many years ago, and when every seeming probability of detection was at an end? Has it not sometimes happened, that a man has even become his own accuser? Unable to bear the clamors and stings of conscience, he has confessed his own guilt and has given himself up to punishment. Now what do these things prove, but that God will certainly bring to light the hidden things of darkness? We see how easily He can do it. He has done it in some instances, to shew that in due time, He will assuredly do it in all. He thus directs sin to find out some sinners here, to convince us that it will find out *every* sinner hereafter.

But in the third place, should a doubt yet remain on our minds, the *Appointment of a day of final retribution* may and must entirely remove it. "God has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world:" a day of the Revelation of his righteous judgment, when "He will render to every man according to his works." Now to what end can such a day be appointed, except it be to deal with sinners according to their deserts? Or how can God deal with sinners according to their deserts, without bringing their sins to light, and inflicting the punishment which they deserve? If God "hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, (whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead,) even Jesus Christ," then it is most certain, that men will be called to account for their sins: then it is most certain, that none of those vain excuses by which they now try to hide or lessen their sins, will be of any use. The secrets of all hearts shall be re-

veiled ; every covering shall be stript away ; and sin shall receive its just recompence of reward.

On the whole, my Brethren, let us weigh well the force of these united arguments. Sin will be punished : for the Perfections of God forbid it to be otherwise. The many remarkable Instances, in which sin has been already detected and punished, prove it. The Appointment of a Day of Judgment confirms it. Whatever other things then, we may be ignorant of : whatever other things we may doubt of : yet let us know *this* for a certainty, that sin will be punished.—“ Be sure your sin will find you out.”

With this great truth then deeply impressed on your hearts, I would now proceed to make a suitable application of it. Call to mind your own sins. Try to remember how many and how great they have been. From the day of your birth to the present day, how numerous have been your violations of the law of God ! How often have you offended Him in thought, word, and deed ! What provocations have you been guilty of ! How great has been your unbelief of his word, your disregard of His Gospel, your unfaithfulness to your engagements ! Hitherto perhaps you have taken little notice of your sins. You have studiously concealed them from others. You have endeavored to forget them yourselves. You have felt little or no concern about them. But God hath not forgotten them. They are all in His remembrance. They are all written in His book. He overlooks none of them. He sees them every one as distinctly as on the day in which they were committed. You perhaps, may have thought your sins to be few or little. You may have supposed that there has not been much evil in them. You may have flattered yourselves that there has been something peculiar in your case, which has made your sins excusable, and has greatly lessened their guilt. But God does not see them in this way. He knows that they are neither few nor little. He knows that they have been without excuse. He sees them with all their aggravation.—What then will you do ? Will you still deny them ? Will you any longer attempt to hide them ? Will you persist in extenuating them ? Rather seek to find them out ; for otherwise they will find you out at the last. Rather with penitent, contrite hearts, confess them to the Lord ; and with unreserved acknowledgments of your guilt and misery, cast yourselves on the

Divine Mercy. Embrace with thankfulness that way of escape which is provided for you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not the sin which you have hitherto committed that will prove your ruin, if you will but now repent of it and forsake it, and seek forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. This blood cleanseth from all sin. Wash in this fountain, and "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Flee to this Saviour; and your sins, though many, shall be forgiven you. They shall never find you out. Of this truth, we have as full assurance as of the one which we have been considering. The same *Perfections of the Almighty*, which require the punishment of every impenitent sinner, are equally pledged to ensure the pardon of every penitent Believer in Jesus Christ. We have the most authentic and astonishing *Instances* of God's mercy in Christ, and of his readiness to pardon even the Chief of Sinners, through this precious blood-shedding. The *Appointment of the Day of Judgment* abundantly confirms the same Truth: for it is appointed no less for the complete justification of Believers in Christ, than for the final condemnation of every unbeliever. Let this blessed assurance then dwell richly in your minds. Confess, lament, and forsake your past wickedness: Believe in Jesus Christ for the removal of your guilt. Seek of him his new-creating spirit to convert and purify your soul. Lead a new life in dependence on his grace; and be sure that thus your sin will not find you out. The Lord will be "faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness."

Nor let the sincere and established Christian deem this to be a subject in which he has no concern. True it is, if you have really fled to Christ for refuge, and are built upon this rock, that your iniquities are pardoned, never more to be mentioned against you. Great as may have been in former times even your habitual violations of the Divine Law; grievous as may have been your provocations; yet if you have been effectually brought to Jesus Christ, God forbid, that the recollection of these things should interrupt your present happiness, or cast a gloom over your present hopes, or prevent you from rejoicing in your present privileges! Only, see that you rejoice with trembling. Be not high minded, but fear. See that you relax not your watchfulness, your strivings against sin. See that it get not advantage over

you. Beware of presumption ; beware of sinning that grace may abound. Trifle not with temptation. Keep your heart with all diligence. Think not, because you are a child of God, that you may venture with safety on forbidden ground. If you thus tempt the Lord, you have no security of being kept from falling. If you return to folly, He may withdraw his protecting grace, and may leave you in the hands of your enemies. And though, in His great mercy and faithfulness, He may not utterly cast you off, yet, "be sure your sin will find you out." He will bring it to your remembrance, and will set before you the things which you have done. He "will bring you into the wilderness of his people ; and there will he plead with you face to face." He "will cause you to pass under the rod, and will bring you into the bond of the covenant." "Though his loving kindness He may not utterly take from you, nor suffer his truth to fail ; yet He will visit your offences with the rod, and your sin with scourges." He will compel you to know that it is "an evil thing and bitter, to have forsaken the Lord your God." He will punish your unfaithfulness. He will make you ashamed of your backslidings. Days and months, nay years of sorrow, darkness, and dismay, may be the fruit of your transgression. Remember David's sin. It was secretly committed. It was artfully concealed. But it found him out. A special Messenger was sent on purpose to detect it. And though it was pardoned, yet it was attended with a most signal and afflictive correction. And, if you sin, shall you escape ? Shall you go unpunished ? Entertain not such a thought. Fear then to offend. Watch and be sober. Bear in mind that you are encompassed with enemies. Remember where your strength lies. Live by faith. Walk in the Spirit. Touch not the unclean thing. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure : for if you do these things you shall never fall.

SERMON III.

The Wedding-Garment.

MATTHEW, XXII. 11, 12, 13.

And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a man, which had not on a Wedding-Garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-Garment? And he was speechless. Then said the King to the Servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

THERE cannot be a stronger proof of the desperate wickedness of the human heart, than that men should attempt to impose upon God; and yet it is an attempt made every day. In all ages of the Church, it is to be feared, that there have been some who have outwardly joined themselves to the Lord's people, while inwardly they have had no pretensions to that character. By taking up a profession of religion they have deceived their fellow-creatures, and have passed in the world for religious persons, even while their hearts have been full of ungodliness and sin. But God sees through every disguise. He distinguishes the true character of men with infallible certainty. He now notices the specious pretender to religion. He will ere long bring to light his hypocrisy, and will at last load him with merited infamy and punishment.

These truths are strikingly represented to us in the text. The passage is the conclusion of the parable of the Marriage-Feast, but comprises a distinct and separate subject. The man who had intruded himself into the Marriage-Feast without having on a Wedding-Garment, represents the person who calls himself a Christian, joins in the ordinances of Christ, mingles with his people, and claims an interest in their privileges; while at the same time he possesses not those marks, which really distinguish and characterise true Christians. Such a person may possibly escape human de-

tection. But God will at length expose him, and bring him to judgment.

For the more profitable discussion of this subject, let us separately consider the three particulars here related of the person in question.

I. His Detection.

II. His Trial.

III. His Sentence.

I. His Detection.

"When the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man, which had not on a Wedding-Garment." In this parable, we are told, that a certain King, having made a marriage for his son, when every thing was ready, sent forth his servants into the highways, to invite all whom they found to partake of the feast. By this means a great number of persons were gathered together; and "the wedding was furnished with guests." Among these however there was one, who in a very essential point differed from the rest. He "had not on a Wedding-Garment." He was not clothed in such a manner as the occasion required, and custom prescribed: and on this account he was in fact an intruder by his presence, disgraced the entertainment, and had no business there.—It may perhaps be objected, that this man could not have made his appearance otherwise than he did: that he was called out of the highway into the feast: that he could not be reasonably expected to carry with him a Wedding-Garment on the road; and consequently that it would be unjust to blame him for what he had no power to prevent or remedy. It is not improbable, but that this objection may have occasionally occurred to our minds. But it is an objection that may be easily removed by adverting to a circumstance, which though not mentioned in the parable, is clearly implied in it. It was a general custom in those times and countries at great entertainments, such as this in the parable is represented to have been, for the master of the feast to furnish his guests with apparel suited to the solemnity. Now we must without doubt conclude that this was done on the present occasion. The man, who came to the feast without a Wedding-Garment, had been offered one. But this offer from some motive or other, he had rejected. He perhaps undervalued the honor conferred on him in being asked to the feast: he had

low conceptions of the dignity and majesty of the King, who had invited him : so long as he obtained admission to the entertainment, he cared little whether his appearance was such, as in fact, it ought to have been : or, perhaps he was too proud to be seen in clothes which did not belong to him : or, possibly, he thought his own sufficiently good for the occasion, and it may be even better, than those which were offered to him : and it is not improbable, that while greatly inferior in quality and value, they might bear some little resemblance to them in form and color ; for we do not find that his fellow-guests took any particular notice of him, or observed the difference between his garment and theirs. However when the King came in to see the guests, he instantly perceived the difference. His eye glancing over the numerous visitors assembled, at once detected the offender, and brought his offence to light.

In this parable, by the feast provided is intended to be set forth, the rich provision made for our souls in the gospel of Christ, whom God has given to be the Bridegroom of the Church. The servants of the King are the ministers of the word, who are directed to publish abroad the glad tidings of Salvation in the name of Jesus Christ, and to invite sinners of every description, to forsake the highway of destruction, and to feast on the glorious blessings laid up for them in Christ. Roused by the gracious invitation, many professedly accept it. "The wedding is furnished with guests." Numbers call themselves the Disciples of Christ, and outwardly embrace his religion. But as St. Paul tells us, was the case with the Jews, "they were not all Israel, which are of Israel ;"* so it is in the Christian church : they are not all true Christians who profess to be so. Not all who appear desirous of sharing the feast, have on the Wedding-Garment. The parable indeed, describes but *one* offender among all the company assembled. In this respect however we are not to consider it as intending to convey an exact representation of the truth. The reason why one only is mentioned in the parable, may perhaps be this : not to denote that the characters of the kind described are *few* in number, and rarely to be found, but to intimate, that though they should be few,

* Romans, ix. 6.

they will not, on that account escape detection. 'Though there should be only *one* professor in the whole church of Christ, who has not on a Wedding-Garment, yet *that one* will surely be discovered by the piercing eye of God, which penetrates through every covering, and sees distinctly every heart. One thief, in the whole camp of Israel, was not concealed from God : nor was one righteous man in Sodom overlooked by Him. Let no one think then that he shall escape detection, because he may stand single in iniquity. As numbers cannot protect, so neither can they hide him. Be he the only one among all the guests, that has not on a Wedding-Garment, the Lord now surely marks him, and will eventually expose him.

But what then is the Wedding-Garment ? This is a most important question, to which I will endeavor plainly and satisfactorily to reply. It is clear that the Wedding-Garment is something, which distinguishes the true Christian from the false one. It is equally clear that it cannot be the outward conduct, which is meant by this expression : for then it would be discerned by the guests, as plainly as by the King. Should any one who professes to be a Christian, live in the allowed practice of any known and open sin, in visible habits of injustice, of impurity, of intemperance, of profane conversation, in the indulgence of malicious and uncharitable tempers, in the neglect of relative duties or of religious ordinances, we should at once clearly know, that his profession of Christianity must be vain. There would be no difficulty in detecting such a man, for he would carry the marks of his hypocrisy on his forehead. But the Wedding-Garment is something hidden and retired ; something which escapes human observation, and is seen only by God. And what can this be, but the inward state and disposition of the heart ? To have on the Wedding-Garment is to have the heart right with God. And when is the heart right with God, but when it is humbled under a deep sense of its own unworthiness ; when it rests with a believing trust on the merits of Christ alone for forgiveness and acceptance ; when it hates and avoids all sin, and desires to love and please God ? This state of heart is the true Wedding-Garment. This state of heart is what distinguishes the real Christian from the pretended one. And let it also be remarked, that this Wedding-Garment, like the one spoken of in the para-

ble, is freely offered to all, to whom the gospel invitation is sent. The Holy Spirit of God is ever ready to work in them faith and holiness, and for these ends He is promised to their earnest prayers. The professor of Christianity, who from whatever motive rejects these offers, remains like the man in the parable without a Wedding-Garment. His heart is not right with God. He is not humbled for sin, but is secretly lifted up with pride. He does not really lay hold on Christ for pardon, but depends on his own merits. He does not hate sin and desire to love God ; but in truth, loves sin and hates God : for the carnal mind is enmity against God. Now such a man, while his outward conduct is moral and specious, may pass in the world for a disciple of Christ ; for " man seeth not as God seeth." But the Lord sees him to be, what he really is, a whited sepulchre, a painted hypocrite. He sees him destitute of faith and holiness, and consequently not having on the Wedding-Garment.

We proceed to consider,

II. The *Trial* of the man who was thus detected. Un-discovered, unsuspected by his Companions at the Feast, he was doubtless promising to himself much pleasure and enjoyment ; when his hopes suddenly experienced the most bitter disappointment. He was awakened from his presumptuous security, by a question of a kind, and from a quarter, which he did not expect. " The King said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-Garment ?" We may conceive his surprize and terror at this alarming question ; a question, which at once charged him with his guilt, and called upon him to defend it. The very title indeed, by which he was addressed, conveyed the most severe and cutting reproof, "*Friend !*" He pretended to be a Friend ; but was he really such ? Did he deserve the name and character which he assumed ? Was he not an *Enemy* in disguise ? What excuse could he urge in extenuation of his guilt ? " How camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-Garment ?" " What canst thou say in thy defence ? Didst thou not know that it was required of thee, to have on a Wedding-Garment, and that to come to the Marriage without one was the greatest affront to the Master of the Feast ? How couldest thou dare to act in so offensive a manner ? Didst thou presume to hope that thou shouldest escape detection ? Didst

thou suppose that thy conduct would not be resented by the King, or would not be punished by Him?" Such was the import of the question. What answer did he make? None.—A consciousness of guilt stopped his mouth. "He was speechless." And this circumstance clearly confirms the statement already made, that this man *might* have had on a Wedding-Garment, if he had not wilfully rejected it. For had this not been the case, he would have had something to urge in his behalf. He *might* and doubtless *would* have pleaded the impossibility of obtaining a suitable garment for the occasion. But he knew that such a plea would be of no avail. He knew that pride, and obstinacy, and a criminal disrespect for the King had been the secret causes of his not appearing in the dress required. His own conscience condemned him. "*He was speechless.*"—Such will be the confusion of the hypocrite, when put upon his trial: of the man, who calling himself a Christian, is destitute of that state of heart, which distinguishes the true servant of Jesus Christ: of the man, who coming to the Gospel-Feast, has not on the Wedding-Garment of faith and holiness. What consternation and dismay will he experience, when the language in the text shall be addressed to him! What reply will he make to the charge preferred against him, "How camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-Garment?" "How couldest thou pretend to call thyself a Christian, when, in the pride and presumption of thy heart, thou wert secretly depending on thine own righteousness instead of on the righteousness which I had wrought out for thee? How couldest thou dare to claim an interest, in the privileges and happiness of my people, when in thine heart, thou retainedst iniquity, and secretly lovedst the wages of unrighteousness? True, thou wert by nature carnal and unholy; and by practice thou hadst corrupted and hardened thy heart; but did I not offer to change and renew thy nature, and to soften and purify thy heart? When didst thou ever earnestly pray to me, to deliver thee from thy sins, and to put my fear within thee, and to sanctify thee wholly by my grace? Didst thou foolishly suppose that I could be imposed on, by the outward appearance? Didst thou wickedly imagine, that I would not resent, or punish the iniquity of those, who draw near to me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me? Do not I search the heart? Do not I require

truth, in the inward parts? Answer me now, if thou art able; and offer some excuse for thy guilt.'—How will the man endure these searching questions? He will be *speechless*. Guilt, conscious guilt will stop his mouth. Detected, exposed, and confounded, he will have nothing to say.—Attend then

III. To his Sentence.

“Bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Such was the sentence denounced on the man, by the King, in the Parable. And such will be the sentence denounced on the false Christian by Christ, at the day of Judgment. The King commanded his servants to seize the offender, and to bind him hand and foot. This was the first part of his punishment. He was reduced to a helpless and a degraded state. In like manner the angels will be sent forth to sever the tares from the wheat, and to bind them in bundles for the fire. In that day hypocrites and unbelievers will be unable to help themselves. All resistance will be vain. They will find it as impossible to elude or withstand the minister of Justice, as they have found it impossible to escape detection. They will be bound hand and foot.—“Take him away and cast him into outer darkness.” This was the other part of the sentence pronounced on the irreverent intruder into the Feast. He had seen the rich entertainment that was provided; but he was not allowed to partake of it. He was instantly to be dragged from the sumptuous feast, from the splendid palace, from the happy company, and to be cast into a dark and loathsome dungeon. Under this terrible but merited change of circumstances how painful would be his feelings! How bitter would be his self-reproaches at the recollection of the happiness he had lost, through his own fault and folly! Far more painful will be the feelings, far more bitter will be the self-reproaches of the false disciple; when sentenced to *depart* from Christ, he shall be cast into the prison of hell: when he shall “see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and himself thrust out:” when he shall find his presumptuous hopes of happiness blasted in a single moment, and nothing left him but a tormenting thought of the bliss which he has lost, and a dreadful experience of the misery which he has incurred. Then indeed will be “weep-

ing and gnashing of teeth." Excessive Grief and horrible Rage will seize and torture him; and there will be no rest day nor night for ever and ever.

Surely the representation of this awful scene, suggests an important question to ourselves: have *we* on the Wedding-Garment? We are all professedly the Lord's guests. We meet together in this house to feast on those precious mercies, which He dispences to us in his ordinances. Does He find *no* hypocrite among us? Does he find *no* enemy, *no* traitor assuming the false appearance of a friend? As his searching eye passes on from soul to soul, can He say of every heart, "*It is right with me?*" Sin indeed, great sin, He sees in every heart; but does He see that it is sin disallowed, resisted, hated? Does He see that it is sin against which we strive, and watch, and pray? Does He see us deeply humbled under a sense of our depravity? Does He see us casting off all pretensions of our own righteousness, those natural garments which cannot hide our shame, and desirous only of being found in him, that we may be clothed in his righteousness, even the righteousness which is of God by faith? Have *we* thus *put on* Christ? Let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord. We cannot deceive Him, let us not deceive ourselves.—But should Conscience testify against us; should it whisper to our hearts, that we have not as yet the Wedding-Garment; what are we to do? Are we to sink under the conviction? Are we to lie down in utter despair? If we should have reason to fear that notwithstanding our past professions, we are as yet wanting in those spiritual desires, those holy dispositions, which distinguish the true Christian; are we to give up all hope of obtaining them? Are we to say in utter despondency, 'Hitherto my heart has been wrong; and it is now impossible that it should ever be made right. Hitherto I have only deceived myself and others. I have presumptuously supposed myself a Christian, without any real pretensions to the name. It is now too late to be renewed unto repentance. I see that I have not on a Wedding-Garment: therefore nothing remains for me but outer darkness and gnashing of teeth.'—Are we to use such language? God forbid. The things which accompany salvation, the things of which we stand in need, may still be ours. The same gracious King, who has invited us to the marriage, is still ready to

provide us with a suitable Garment also. In His name it is still offered to us. In His name we may be assured, that, if convinced of our past irreverence, presumption, and neglect, we are humbly desirous of being made fit and worthy for partaking of the Feast, such a desire is not even now too late. Only let us give up ourselves wholly to Him. Let us yield our hearts to Jesus Christ, and He will work in them all those dispositions, which characterize and adorn his people. Let us deprecate his wrath, and implore his pardon : and He will not upbraid us, nor retain his anger for ever. Let us pray to Him, and He will implant and strengthen in us faith and holiness. He will teach and will enable us to put off the old man, and to put on the new. He will cover us with his most perfect righteousness ; that garment of salvation, in which the Saints are clad. Though like the Prodigal, we come to Him in shame and sorrow, yet He will meet us with tokens of reconciliation ; will receive us as his children, will put on us the best robe, and hide our guilt. Let us then come to Him with one heart, and with one mind. Let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be found in *Him*. Having on this Wedding-Garment, let us come to the marriage : "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."*

* Rev. xxii. 17.

SERMON IV.

Youth Solemnly Admonished.

ECCLESIASTES, xi. 9.

Rejoice, O Young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy Youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.

“ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* This is the testimony which St. Paul, himself an inspired writer, bears to the sacred Writings. Whenever we read, or hear the Bible, let us remember this testimony ; and recollect by whom, as well as for what purpose the Scriptures were given. They were given by inspiration of God ; and they were given for our profit. May He enable us to make a profitable use of that passage which has been read for the text ! “Rejoice, O young Man, in thy youth ; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

These are the words of Solomon, who like the other inspired pen-men, “spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.” They are addressed, as we see, to a young man. “Rejoice, O young Man in thy Youth.”—We are not however to suppose that there was some particular Young Man, to whom they were exclusively addressed. They are spoken to any, and to every young Man. Neither need we confine the expression even to young Men. It may be understood as including young persons also of the other sex. We shall see that the address itself equally belongs to them ; that in fact it applies generally to youth ; to all without exception, whether male or female, who are young.—It is

* 2 Timothy, iii. 16.

in this sense that I purpose to consider the passage. And with this view, I would earnestly, and affectionately request the serious and particular attention of all those, who are thus more immediately interested in the subject.

For the clearer explanation of the passage we must understand the Royal Preacher as making two suppositions respecting the person whom he here addresses.

1st. That he is bent on leading a life of pleasure and enjoyment, on gratifying *his own* inclinations, and doing *his own* will : and,

2dly. That he will not be dissuaded from these purposes by the advice, or example of *others* : that he refuses to profit by *their* experience, but is resolved to make trial for himself ; and is sanguine in his expectations of happiness, notwithstanding the vanity, and disappointment, which *they* have met with in similar paths.

Such are the suppositions which must be here understood with respect to the person addressed. And are not these suppositions correct, and well-founded with respect to Youth in general ? Are not young persons naturally distinguished by a strong disposition to enjoy themselves, and to take their pleasure ; and by as strong an indisposition to listen to advice, and to be guided by the experience of others ? Bent on pleasing and gratifying themselves, they enter without fear on the paths of vanity, and sin ; while presumptuous, and self-confident they shut both their ears and eyes against admonition and example. Does not experience justify this representation ? Nay let me appeal to their own hearts. Let me put it to their own consciences to say, whether this be not a true picture of themselves. You, who are now in the bloom and vigor of youth, look into yourselves ; examine your hearts ; and say, is it not secretly your desire, and purpose to lead a life of pleasure, and enjoyment, to indulge your own taste, and to do whatever may please, amuse, or gratify yourself ? To this end, is it not your wish to be freed from all restraint, to drive away serious thoughts, and to be allowed without opposition or control to follow the bent of your own inclinations ? Do you not intend within yourselves, so far as you may have it in your power, to put these desires, and purposes into practice ? And do not you flatter yourselves, that in doing thus you shall find happiness : that the more you have

your own way, the happier you shall be : and that through your own prudence, and foresight, your good fortune, or good management, you shall escape the snares, and evils into which others have fallen ? I ask, are not these your secret thoughts, and purposes ? If they are, you exactly answer to the person addressed in the text, and with the greatest reason, and propriety may yourself be addressed in the same words. In this case, it may be said to you, to every one who is *included* in this description, “ Rejoice O young Person, in thy youth.”—“ Seeing thou art thus disposed, and determined to give up thy Youth to folly, vanity, and sin : to take thy pleasure, to follow the devices, and desires of thine own heart : seeing, that thou art thus resolved to throw off all restraint, to shut thy ears to reproof, and with thine eyes open to venture on those slippery paths, in which so many have perished in your sight : seeing this to be the case—Go and do as thou intendest : “ And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth.” Fulfil thy purposes. Follow thy pleasures. Take thy fill of enjoyment. “ Walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” Gratify thy inclinations. Please thyself to the full. But remember what is to follow. A dreadful Reckoning awaits thee. Do whatever thy heart thus inclines thee to do. But do it at thy peril. For “ know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” To Him thou art responsible for all thy doings. To Him thou must give account for this loss of time ; for this waste of health and strength ; for this abuse of gifts, and talents ; for these depraved inclinations ; for these sensual desires ; for these headstrong passions ; for this presumptuous self-will ; for this deafness to reproof ; for this blindness to danger ; for this dislike of God’s service ; for this contempt of his favor ; for this daring provocation of his Wrath. Let this statement rouse, and alarm thee. Let the thoughts of a Judgment to come arrest thee in thy course, and lead thee now that thy Heart is tender, and thy conscience as yet not hardened, to desist from thy foolish purposes, and to turn, and cleave unto the Lord thy God.

Such appears to be the full meaning of this animated address. May it be duly impressed on all your hearts ! Especially may you feel, and retain a deep conviction, a lively apprehension of the certainty, of the reality of a Judg-

ment to come ! Such a conviction, such an apprehension will furnish one of the most powerful checks to your youthful propensities. It will be one of your best preservatives against folly and sin.—But on this very account, in exact proportion to what ought to be your labor, and study to fix this truth deeply, and permanently in your hearts, will it be the labor, and study of your great Adversary the Devil to root out and efface it. He will try by every art either to make you altogether disbelieve it, or to keep it so entirely out of your sight as to render even the professed belief of it, of no real use. And while so great is *his* subtlety, and *your* depravity, while such is *his* forwardness to deceive you, and *your* readiness to be deceived, is there not reason to dread the consequences ? He will suggest to you as he suggested to Eve, ‘ “ You shall not surely die.” You shall not certainly be brought into Judgment. Or admitting that you may be, yet allowances will be made for youthful sins. God will not judge you for irregularities, to which your time of life so naturally leads, and for which even though there may be harm in them, you have so good an excuse to plead.’ These will be Satan’s insinuations to your mind. Perhaps he already urges you by such thoughts as these to rejoice in your Youth, and to walk in the ways of your Heart, and in the sight of your Eyes. In what manner then can one, who has your best interests at heart, more effectually shew his readiness to serve you, than by exposing the fallacy of these reasonings, and by thus endeavoring to strengthen you against their force ?

Is it secretly suggested to your Heart, that you shall not certainly be brought into Judgment ? Yield not to such a suggestion ; no not for a moment. Meet it, as it ought to be met, with the positive declarations of Scripture. There you are expressly told, that “ God will bring you into judgment ; ” “ that we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ ; that “ the Books will be opened ; ” and that we “ shall be judged out of those things which are written in the Books according to our Works ; ” that God “ hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”* These are God’s words : the

* 2 Cor. v. 10,—Rev. xx. 12.—Acts, xvii. 31.

words of Him, who is Truth itself, and cannot lie. What have you to oppose to them? What have you to bring against them? Nothing but the suggestions of him, who is a Liar, and the Father of Lies. Will you believe Satan rather than God? Will you give credit to one, who is your Enemy, and only seeks to deceive, and ruin you; rather than to Him, who is your best, and kindest Friend, and only desires to warn and save you? Surely you cannot but deliberately prefer light to darkness, truth to falsehood. You must feel convinced in your conscience, whatever Satan may suggest to the contrary, that you will certainly be brought into Judgment.

But the other suggestion which I mentioned is more dangerous, because more subtle; and requires therefore to be more fully, and distinctly examined, and opposed. ‘Allowances’ (it may be put into your mind) ‘will be made for Youthful Sins. God will not judge you for irregularities, to which your time of life so naturally leads, and for which you have so good an excuse to plead.’—And where do you learn that God will not judge you for these irregularities? In the text He hath expressly declared, that He will judge you for them. Can you produce a single passage of Scripture which supports a contrary doctrine? Look from one end of the Bible to the other, if there be any thing to justify, to countenance the notion, that God will not take account of Sins committed in Youth. Why hath He commanded us “to remember our Creator in the days of our Youth,” if yet He will not punish those, who at that season of life forget Him? We are expressly told in the chapter following the text, that “God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Take notice of the expressions, “every work,” “every secret thing.” No exceptions are made in favor of Youthful Sins. No allowance is given to them. Listen not then to a suggestion which the Word of God so positively contradicts.—Besides are there not other ways in which the fallacy of this supposition may be clearly exposed? Does not God oftentimes judge youthful sins in this life; and thus give earnest that He will judge them in the Life to come? Do you ask how He does this? I will shew you two ways in which He does it.

1. In the course of His Providence. What we call the natural course of things is nothing else but that regular succession of events, that certain connection between causes, and effects, which God has originally appointed. Whatever therefore happens in the natural course of things may be considered as happening by Divine appointment. It is what God under those circumstances has willed should happen. But is there any thing which in the natural course of things more frequently happens, than that youthful sins are more or less punished in after life? What are the natural consequences of early extravagance, and wastefulness, but distress, and poverty? Is a young man idle and dissipated, devoted to frivolous pursuits, and spending his time and talents in pleasure and amusements; how certainly does he suffer for his folly and misconduct, perhaps during all the days of his life? He arrives at no eminence. He obtains no respect. He has laid no foundation for useful, rational, honorable occupations. He has provided no resources for the time, when his trifling enjoyments will please no longer. He has prepared for himself a listless, discreditable, miserable old age.—Is he intemperate, and licentious in the days of his youth? What does this conduct naturally entail, but disease and pain; a debilitated body, and an enfeebled mind? See him an old man, in what ought to have been the prime of his days. In the expressive language of Job, “His bones are full of the sin of his youth:”* and they soon lie down in an untimely grave.—Do you want any further proofs of the natural consequence of Youthful sins? Go to the Criminal, who has forfeited his life to the laws of his Country. Hear his dying confessions. To what cause does he ascribe his dreadful end, but to the sins and wickednesses of his Youth? ‘Take warning’ (he cries) ‘by my example. When young I forgot God, I disobeyed and provoked Him: and now He has righteously visited my offences. He left me to go on in the way which I had chosen. He has sentenced me to reap the evil which I sowed.’—Thus God in the course of his Providence frequently shews that He doth not overlook the sins committed in Youth. And if He thus judges them in this life, can you presume to hope that He will not bring them into Judgment hereafter?

* Job, xx. 11.

But farther, there is another way in which sin is often punished in this life, namely,

2. By the Strokes and Stings of Conscience. Conscience is, as it were, God's representative in our Soul. He has placed it there to remind us of our duty to Him, and to plead his cause within us. We may often silence, stupify, and deaden it; and so may prevent it from discharging its office aright. But when once awakened, it performs a faithful part. It arraigns us at the bar of God, sets all our sins before us, loads us with accusations, denounces vengeance on us, and forces us to judge and condemn ourselves. But in thus acting the accuser's part, in bringing our sins to remembrance, and setting them in order before us, does it take no notice of the Sins of our Youth? As God's faithful Minister in the Soul, does it tell a man, that these sins are of no consequence, and need not be regarded? Far otherwise. On the contrary, it enforces on him the solemn declaration of the text, "For all these things God will bring thee into Judgment:" for the sins of thy Youth, as well as those of thy riper years.—In proof of this remark, look at the examples of those persons in Scripture, who are represented as being most under the influence of an awakened conscience, and see in what manner they felt and spoke upon this subject. Hear what Job declares when confessing his guilt unto the Lord; "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of *my Youth*." Hear what David says, when imploring the Divine Mercy; "Remember not the sins of *my Youth*, nor my transgressions." Attend especially to the case of the deeply penitent Ephraim, who is represented as bemoaning himself thus: "After that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea even confounded," (and now mark the cause of this deep consternation,) "because I did bear the reproach of *my Youth*."* Did all these penitents thus feel, and lament the sins of their Youth, and condemn themselves on account of them? Did their awakened Consciences thus bring these sins to remembrance, and charge, and oppress their souls with the weight of them? And will God, do you think, overlook them, or make no account of them, or not bring them into Judgment?

* Job, xiii. 26.—Psalm, xxv. 7.—Jer. xxxi. 19.

Dismiss every such vain, presumptuous, unscriptural idea. Be assured that the sins and offences of your Youth will one day be the source of the most genuine sorrow. You will either lament them in this world with bitter contrition and deep self-abasement, should it please God in his mercy to bring you to repentance : or you will bewail them for ever in the world to come, with unceasing but unavailing remorse and anguish.

“Therefore” (as the royal preacher adds in the verse following the text) “therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh.” Lay not up for yourselves such painful consequences in store. Avoid sorrow hereafter by avoiding sin now. Be warned in time. Rejoice *not* in the days of thy Youth, *neither* walk in the ways of thine heart, *nor* in the sight of thine eyes. Listen to the voice of friendly and sober admonition. “Be not wise in your own eyes : fear the Lord, and depart from evil.” Make religion your choice, and your practice in the days of your Youth. “Exalt her and she shall promote thee ; she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her.” “She is more precious than rubies : and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches, and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness : and all her paths are peace.”* Seek the Lord betimes : for “they that seek Him early shall find Him.” Hear how earnestly, how tenderly He reasons, and expostulates with you. “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth ?”† Comply with this reasonable request. Call him your Heavenly Father. Commit yourselves to his care and keeping. Choose him for the guide of your youth ; and he will be your Protector in your riper years, your Consolation in old age, your Refuge in death, and your Portion for ever.

If this discourse has appeared to be directed to one part of the congregation with a seeming exclusion to the rest, let it be remembered that it is that part of the flock, which especially requires the Shepherd’s care ; and in respect of which the Chief Shepherd has said, “Feed my Lambs.”—But in fact the exclusion has been more seeming than real.

* Proverbs, iv. 8.—iii. 15, 16, 17. † Jeremiah, iii. 4.

The discourse, though directly addressed to the Young, may yet have been profitably listened to by those, who are of riper age. It may have served to remind them of the sins of their youth, and so may have disclosed to them a load of guilt, which possibly they did not suspect to have belonged to them. My brethren, if this discourse should have thus opened your eyes, it has been highly profitable to you : for it is of as great consequence to you to be put in mind of the *unrepented* sins of your youth ; as it is to the young to be seasonably warned against those sins into which they are likely to run. And if a conviction of the certainty of being brought into judgment ought to deter *them* from committing sin, the same conviction ought to lead *you* to repent of those sins, which you have already committed. For except you repent of them, you must perish. Let them have been committed ever so many years ago, yet, like debts once contracted, they are still standing against you. No interval of time can take away aught from their guilt. *You* may have long forgotten them, but they are all registered with God and ready to be produced against you.

Let these things sink deep into your heart. May they be fixed there, till with Job you are made to “possess your former iniquities :” till with David you are taught to cry out “Remember not the sins of my Youth :” till with Ephraim you “are ashamed, yea even confounded, because you bear the reproach of your Youth.” For then will you flee for mercy, where it may be found ; even to that God, who pardoneth iniquities, and blotteth out as a cloud our transgressions ; even to that Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin ; who bids the weeping penitent rejoice, who calls to Himself the heavy-laden sinner, and promises to give him rest. Thus shalt thou find rest. Thus shalt thou rejoice. Thus shalt thou be cleansed from all sin, and shalt forget the shame of thy Youth.

SERMON V.

God's tender Expostulation with Young Persons.

JEREMIAH, iii. 4.

Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of my Youth?

IN another discourse addressed chiefly to young persons, it was my endeavor to fix on their minds a serious impression, and to stir them up to the practice of a holy life. I now purpose to resume the attempt. But the mode which I shall adopt on the present occasion, will be different from that, to which I had recourse in the former. I then pointed out to them the folly of sin; I shall now set before them the wisdom of religion. Then I attempted to alarm them, by displaying the terrors of the Lord; I shall now try to persuade them by a display of his mercies.

With this view I have made choice of a text, in which the Lord most tenderly expostulates with them, by his prophet Jeremiah in these very affecting words, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my Youth?" In an humble endeavor to exhibit the full force and meaning of this passage, I shall proceed,

I. To shew the Particulars of the Proposal comprised in it;—and

II. To point out some Motives to compliance, which the text itself seems to suggest.

I. The Proposal here made to you comprises three Particulars,

1st, That you should make God your Father. For such is clearly the meaning of the Invitation, "Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father?"—To cry unto God "My Father" is the same thing with calling Him "Father:" but merely to call Him so cannot be all which is here intended: since to call Him "Father" is as easy as to call Christ "Lord," which of itself we know, will profit us nothing. The expression must evidently mean to *make* Him your Father; a

Father, whom you may love, honor, and obey. It implies that you really become His children: that you look up to Him as a Father, with reverence, affection, and awe: that you commit yourselves to his care and keeping, and with composure and confidence rely on his fatherly protection, and love.—This is what you are here invited to do. But how can you do this? Instead of being a child of God, have you not been an enemy to Him by wicked works? Have you not by disobedience forfeited his favor, and, like the Prodigal, have put yourselves out of his family? How then can you look up to him as a Father? How can you hope that He will look upon you as a child? What confidence can you have towards Him? Under such circumstances confidence will be presumption; and to rely on his fatherly care of you, altogether delusion.—This indeed would be true, had He not revealed a way, in which notwithstanding your unworthiness and guilt, you may yet call Him Father without presumption, and find your confidence in Him to be no delusion. And that way is by believing in Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. Believe with the heart in the Lord Jesus Christ; and all the distance which sin has made between your soul and God shall be utterly done away. He is “in Christ reconciling the world unto himself:” and in Christ you will find him a reconciled father to you. For, as St. Paul says, “Ye are all the Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;” and St. John, “to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”* By faith we are made one with Christ: and being one with Him, His Father becomes our Father; His God, our God. Being redeemed by His Blood from the bondage of sin and death, we receive the adoption of Sons. We are admitted into the family and household of God, and become entitled to the present privileges, and the future inheritance of that Glorious Relation. “Because Ye are Sons” (says the Apostle to the Galatians,) “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.”† “Being justified by faith in Jesus Christ we have peace with God;” and being taught and enlightened by the holy Spirit the Comforter to see and feel ourselves at peace with Him,

* Gal. iii. 26.—John, i. 12. † Gal, iv. 6.

we learn to look up to Him with confidence, and to cry to Him indeed "My Father!"

Here then you may more distinctly see what is meant by this part of the Proposal in the text. When the Lord proposes to you to cry unto Him "My Father," in other words He invites you with the heart to take Christ for your Saviour, and by faith to receive Him as your all in all, "of God made unto you wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."* Are you already called a Christian, baptised into his visible Church, outwardly joining in his ordinances? It is here proposed to you to become inwardly a Christian; not to be content with merely bearing the name, but to secure to yourself all the glorious privileges which that name imports. Do you already make something more of a religious profession than you once did, than many others do? Still it is here proposed to you not to rest satisfied with such a profession. 'Come, says the Lord, give me thine heart. Lay hold of my covenant. Behold I stand at the door, and knock. Open unto me that I may enter in; and may fill, and rule, and bless thy soul. Thou shalt be my son, my daughter, my pleasant child; and I will be a Father, an Almighty Father to thee.'

2dly. The next particular here proposed is that you should choose God for the Guide of your Youth. This point indeed necessarily follows the other. For if you make God your Father, you cannot but choose Him for your Guide. An explanation of it however will help more clearly to exhibit the full meaning of the invitation.

As to make God your Father implies that you love, and fear Him, and put your whole trust in Him; so to choose Him for your Guide signifies that you regard his Authority, follow his Will, and comply with his Directions. Now there are two ways especially, in which God makes known his Will to you, and shews what He would have you to do.

First, by his Word. The Bible which is God's Word, is given to us on purpose to be a "light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our paths." It teaches us both by precept and example. It instructs, reproves, threatens, persuades, and encourages us. It tells us what to do, and what to leave undone; what to practise, and what to avoid. It discloses

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

to us what is pleasing to God, and will be profitable to us ; and what is displeasing to Him, and will be hurtful to us. It reveals to us Jesus Christ, " as the Way, the Truth, and the Life : " bids us to believe in Him to the saving of our souls : directs us to pray to the Father in His Name for every thing we need ; and promises that out of his Fulness we shall receive a full supply for all our wants. Thus God instructs you by his Word.

And *Secondly*, by his Spirit. While God gives to us His Word to teach us outwardly, He vouchsafes also his Spirit to teach us inwardly. By this heavenly Monitor He enlightens, awakens, and directs our conscience. Through his secret influence on the heart, He puts into us holy desires, and good counsels ; suggests to us the way in which we ought to walk ; reproves us when we go wrong ; commends us when we do right ; faithfully reminds us of the consequences of disobedience ; and graciously sets before us the Glory that shall be revealed. In this manner you are taught by the Spirit.

When therefore God proposes to you in the text to choose Him for the Guide of your youth He invites you in other words to give up yourselves to the blessed teaching of His Word, and of His Spirit. He says to you, ' Take the Bible for your guide and rule. Study it, and let it be mixed with faith in your heart. Believe what it reveals. Practise what it commands. Take no other standard of right, and wrong, but this. Be not persuaded by wicked and worldly men to adopt their maxims and to act upon their principles. Listen not to their false and destructive reasoning. Follow me fully ; and have respect unto all my commandments. Attend especially to the motions of my Good Spirit in your heart. Do not resist, and grieve Him. Obey his gentle, friendly voice. Refuse not any thing which He directs you to do. Retain nothing from which He requires you to part. Be assured that his precious consolations will abundantly compensate for every loss. He will shed abroad within you that heavenly peace which passeth all understanding, and which the world can neither give, nor take away.'

3dly. There is one other Particular still proposed to you in the text, namely, that you should do these things instantly, without delay. " Wilt thou not *from this time* cry unto

me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of my Youth?" There is in all men a sad propensity to put off the doing even of what they know to be right, and really approve. Though the judgment be convinced, yet such is the natural unwillingness of our hearts to come to God, and close with his offers, that we too often say to our conviction, as the trembling Felix said to the Apostle, "Go thy way for this time, when we have a convenient season we will call for thee." Any season but the present appears to be desirable; and while the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, is the real cause of our delay, we flatter ourselves that those things which seem to us the causes, will in a short time cease to operate, and to oppose our course.

But God counsels you in the text to beware of this self-deception. He reminds you that there is no time like the present. "Wilt thou not *from this time* cry unto me, My Father? To day (says He) if you will hear my voice, harden not your heart." Put not off to another day; no, not till to-morrow, the blessed work to which I have called you. Take Me for your Father, choose Me for your Guide, from this time, from this day. I am ready, even now to be a Father and a Guide unto you. Be you as ready as I am: nor let a day, an hour be past, till in your heart you have joined yourself to Me in a perpetual Covenant, which shall never be forgotten.

Such are the Particulars comprised in the proposal in the text. I shall now endeavor,

II. To point out some Motives for compliance, which the passage itself seems to suggest.

1st. I would remind you of the *Grace and Condescension* of the Proposal here made to you.—Doth the Lord God Almighty, who dwelleth in the Highest Heaven, whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, doth He graciously offer to become your Father, and your Guide? Doth He condescend to invite you into his family, to intreat you to be numbered with his Children, and to entrust yourself to his Care, and Love? Surely such a Proposal, so rich and precious in itself, coming from such a quarter, urged in so free and tender a manner, ought of itself to engage and win your compliance. How will you be able to answer it to your conscience, if you should resist, and reject so much mercy? How can you find it in your heart to resist and reject it?

Consider "what manner of love is this, that you should be called the Children of God?" What infinite compassion! What boundless mercy! That the Lord should not only have provided a way, and such a way; a way so purchased, so provided, even with the blood of his dear Son; a way, in which you, unworthy as you are of his favor, and even justly deserving of his wrath, may yet receive the adoption of Children;—but also, that He should be the first to offer, nay, to solicit you to accept these gracious terms of peace and reconciliation! You perhaps have hitherto paid little regard to Him. You have thought his gentle service a hard yoke. You have in your heart disliked his holy will and ways. You have got at a distance from Him: have preferred another Master, and chosen another Guide. And now what are his feelings; what is his behavior towards you? Does He feel resentment towards you? Does He frown upon you? Does He say of you, "Let him alone, he is joined unto Idols?" Does He say to you, "Depart from me. Be filled with the fruit of your own devices. Reap that which you have sown?"—No. He anxiously desires, and seeks your happiness. His bowels yearn over you. He longs for your return. He affectionately entreats you to come back to Him, and to share the blessings which He has provided for you. "Wilt Thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of my Youth?" Can you withstand this pressing invitation? Are you not drawn with these cords of love? Is not your heart constrained to answer, "Thou art my Father, Thou shalt be the Guide of my Youth?"

2. I would put you in mind of the *Reasonableness* of such a proceeding. This holy choice, this wise surrender of yourself to God, how good, how profitable will it be for you! How powerfully does your own interests lead you to comply with the Proposal in the text!

Where will you find a Father like God, who can love you as He will love you; who can provide for you as He will provide for you? Perhaps you may be already deprived of your earthly parents: or if they still be continued to you, yet you may soon be deprived of them. But if the Almighty be your Father, He will be your Father for ever. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Your earthly parents, however strong may be their love to you, however anxious their desire of doing you good, can do but little

for you. There are numberless evils from which they cannot protect you. There are innumerable blessings which they can never insure to you. But your heavenly Father, if indeed you take Him for your Father, is able and mighty to save, and to bless you to the uttermost.

Where also will you find such a Guide of your Youth as God? Entering on an ensnaring world, surrounded by countless temptations, solicited on every side to folly and to sin, without experience and without strength, what reason have you to accept and value the offer of a Heavenly Guide, who alone can conduct you in peace and safety through all these intricate paths, and can bring you at last to eternal rest and happiness! Refuse the offer of his heavenly Guidance, and where will your trust be placed? You will be like a vessel in a boisterous sea without a Pilot to direct your course. The sport of every wind, the victim of every current, you cannot but quickly split on some of those many rocks and shoals which wait for your destruction.—Then choose the Lord for your Guide. He will be with you in danger. His grace shall be sufficient for you. The winds and the waves obey his voice. He will comfort you with his presence. He will strengthen you with his spirit. He will support you with his arm. He will preserve you from sinking. He will bring you at last into the desired haven.

3. I would call to your notice the *Seasonableness* of the Proposal in the text. “Wilt thou not *from this time* cry unto me, My Father?” Is not *this time* the most convenient, the most seasonable for the duty proposed? The time past cannot be recalled. You may deeply regret, that you have hitherto neglected to make God your Father, and to choose Him for the Guide of your youth. But regret will not recover the time which is past. Opportunities lost are gone for ever. Your business is to improve those which remain. The present time is still your own. Notwithstanding the time that is past, and the opportunities that are lost; yet time and opportunity await you still. God still waits to be gracious. He still invites you. He still says to you, “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation.” Wilt thou not then *from this time* cry unto me?

It may be that there are some circumstances in your case, which give peculiar weight to this expostulation. It may be that at this present juncture the Lord is enforcing by his

Providence the gracious invitations of his word. Perhaps you are under affliction. Deprived of some earthly comfort, you are feeling the vanity of the world. You are taught the folly of human dependancies. You are looking about for some better Foundation than what this world can furnish. Or possibly you are experiencing the mercy of the Lord. He has heard your cry, and has brought you out of trouble. He has raised you from the bed of sickness, and has brought you back from the brink of the grave. He has turned away some heavy calamity which you feared, and has given you joy instead of mourning.—Surely under any of these circumstances He pleads with additional force, when He says to you, “Wilt thou not *from this time*”—*this time of Affliction*; *this time of Deliverance*; *this time of Rejoicing*—“Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the Guide of My Youth?”

May there be some hearts present, who echo back this language! May there be some who feel the constraining influence of these united arguments; who are at this moment conscious of a secret, of an earnest desire of giving up themselves to God now in the days of their Youth!—I trust that the Good Spirit of our God, which has put this desire into your heart, will enable you to fulfil it! Let me exhort you for your parts seriously to set about the solemn duty. As one step to this great end, embrace the next opportunity, which may recur, of devoting yourselves to the Lord at his Table. The Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood is that appointed ordinance, in which you may most properly renew your Christian Covenant, and present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. There the Lamb of God, who died to save you, sets forth the precious memorials of his love. There He waits to meet, to receive, to comfort, to strengthen every humble, earnest soul.—There then let it be your object, your desire, your study to meet Him. Set your heart to the work. Pray to Him for grace to dispose and qualify you for this solemn service. Come with humility, fear, and trust. Come with repentance, faith, and love. And may the Lord make you willing in the day of his power; that so He may be your Father and your Guide in this world, and your everlasting portion and happiness in the world to come!

SERMON VI.

The Word of the Lord Glorified.

2 THESSALONIANS, iii. 1.

Finally, Brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you.

AMONG the Epistles of St. Paul, there are none more pleasing and interesting than the two to the Church of Thessalonica. The Apostle seems to have felt a peculiar affection for the members of that Church, and to have reflected on the time which he had spent among them, with singular satisfaction. Indeed the success of his labors among them had been very considerable. For though he had "spoken unto them the Gospel of God with much contention;" and ever since his departure they had endured much tribulation and persecution; yet they appear, and probably from these very circumstances, to have been remarkably free from those corruptions and divisions with which the other Christian Churches were in general infected, and in a very conspicuous manner to have maintained and adorned their religious profession. Hence it is, that in these Epistles we meet with so little of censure and reproof. In respect to the Thessalonians (with a very slight exception as to some individuals,) there is nothing but commendation and praise, and on the Apostle's part satisfaction and thankfulness. Thus we find in the text, that with great earnestness and humility having desired their prayers in his behalf, that "the word of the Lord might have free course;" that it might run, as the word literally means; he adds, and that it may "be glorified, even as it is with you." He represents the conduct of the Thessalonians not only as doing honor to the Gospel, but as doing it to such a degree as to make them even a pattern and a standard to other Churches. Nay, if other Churches did but glorify the word of the Lord as they glorified it, the Apostle's most sanguine expectations and wishes would be

fully answered. "Pray, that the Word of God may be glorified, *even as it is with you.*"—Now if we consider how ardent and anxious was St. Paul's desire of exalting the Gospel, and how high were his ideas of Christian attainments, we cannot but regard his language on this occasion, as conveying a very striking commendation on the Thessalonian Church; while it naturally prompts us to enquire, what those particulars in their conduct were, which called forth these strong expressions in their favor. Nor is this an enquiry of little moment: for in whatever respects, and in whatever way the Word of the Lord was glorified by the Thessalonians; in the same respects, and in the same way, so far as circumstances will admit, it doubtless ought to be glorified by us. Let us then pursue this enquiry with a view to our self-examination and instruction.

In carefully reading over these two Epistles, to which we have referred, we shall find that the information which they furnish on the subject in question, may be considered as relating,

I. To the Way, in which the Word of the Lord had been received by the people of Thessalonica.

II. To the Change, which it had wrought in those who had thus received it.

III. To the Fruit, which it had produced, and still continued to produce, in them.

May the consideration of these Particulars be so blessed to us, that the Word of the Lord may run, and be glorified with us, as it was with those to whom the Apostle wrote!

I. As to the Way, in which the Thessalonians had received the Word of the Lord.

We know from the short account given of St. Paul's proceedings at Thessalonica, that his success in that city was very considerable, and probably very rapid. The larger number indeed of the Jews, who resided there, as in most other places, where the Gospel was preached, rejected it; and soon stirred up so great a tumult and opposition against the Apostles, that they were obliged to leave the place. In the mean time however the Word of the Lord had run among the people: for "some of the Jews believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great mul-

*itude, and of the chief women not a few.** And St. Paul, in his first epistle, clearly countenances this opinion, when he says, "For yourselves, Brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was *not in vain*:" a mode of expression which plainly intimates that his ministry at Thessalonica had been marked with signal success, and had made rapid progress among the inhabitants. Indeed, he had before said, that "the Gospel had come not unto them in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance:" and that they had "become followers of the Apostles, and of the Lord, having received the word (though) in much affliction (yet) with joy of the Holy Ghost." And afterwards he more expressly tells them, that he "thanked God without ceasing, because that when they received the Word of God, which they had heard of him, they had received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God."†—Putting all these passages together, we may fairly conclude, that the Thessalonian Church had glorified the Word of the Lord in the *Way*, in which they had received it. They had received it when it had been preached to them, with readiness and humility. They had not cavilled at its doctrines, nor objected to its precepts. They had yielded a speedy assent to its demands, had admitted the proofs and testimonies with which it was confirmed; and believing it to be the Word of God, they had embraced it with joy; had relied on it with confidence; and had professed themselves (notwithstanding the afflictions and persecutions to which such a profession had exposed them,) the Followers of Christ and of the Churches of God.—Now thus to receive the word of the Lord is doubtless to *glorify* it. Thus to embrace and profess the Gospel is to put honor upon the Gospel, and consequently upon Him, whose Gospel it is.

Let us enquire then, whether we have thus received and honored it? Let us seriously put the question to our own hearts. Have we glorified the Word of the Lord as these Thessalonians did? Have we received it as *His* Word? Have we heard it with meekness, listened to it with attention, bowed to it with humility, and obeyed it with all readiness of mind? Have we considered without prejudice the

* Acts, xvii. 4. † 1 Thess. i. 5, 6.—ii. 13.

many claims which it prefers to our attention and acceptance ; the many proofs by which it is supported ; the many grounds on which it demands our most implicit faith and obedience ? We are indeed called Christians, and so far make a profession of embracing the Gospel. But have we *really* embraced it ? Have we embraced it on conviction of its being the Word of God ? Have we embraced it from a belief, that it is in truth “ the Power of God unto Salvation ? ” When the Gospel was preached to the Thessalonians, they received it with joy. Let us call to mind for how many years the joyful sound may have been proclaimed to us. And have we received it with joy ? Alas ! Has it not been sounded in the ears of some of us to no purpose, even to this day ? Have not invitations, commands, entreaties, time after time, been urged upon us in vain ? The Thessalonians received the Word with joy, even though it came accompanied with much affliction, and entailed on them great persecutions. To us it has come without these things. Surely then if we receive it not, these Converts will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us. For they glorified the Word of the Lord ; but we dishonor it. They valued his gracious message, but we make light of it. They received it with gladness, and rejoiced in it under all their afflictions. We turn a deaf ear to it, and think to be happy in rejecting it. Let us remember the declarations of the Almighty, which applies to His Word no less than to Himself ; “ Them that honor me, I will honor : but they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.”*

Let us now consider,

II. The *Change*, which the Word of the Lord had wrought in these Thessalonians.

The Gospel, or the Word of the Lord, is the Instrument, which He has appointed for the reformation of mankind ; for “ turning them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.” Now when the Word produces this effect ; when it thus turns and changes men ; then it is glorified. Its power is seen, felt, and acknowledged. All who witness the effect, must own the power of the Instrument by which it has been wrought, and must, secretly at least, confess “ This hath God done.”—How then in *this respect* had

* 1 Samuel, ii. 30.

the Thessalonians glorified the Word of God? What *Change* had it wrought in them? St. Paul tells us, that it had "wrought effectually in them:" and the effect was this, "They had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven."* Before the Gospel had been preached among them; they had been Idolaters, worshipping the Creature instead of the Creator. They had been sunk in heathen ignorance and darkness, had served idols of wood and stone, and were living altogether without God in the world. But now, having received the Word with joy, they had been "brought out of darkness into marvellous light." They had forsaken these vanities, had renounced their Idols, and had relinquished their heathen practices. Instead of the Gods many, and the Lords many, whom they had formerly served, they were now become the Servants of Jehovah; they "worshipped God in the spirit and rejoiced in Christ Jesus," looking for his glorious appearance, when He should be revealed from heaven "to be glorified in his Saints; and to be admired in all them that believed." What a change was this! How clearly did it prove that the Instrument, which had wrought such an effect, was indeed "mighty in operation," "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," "the Power of God unto Salvation!" Who could behold these Christian Converts turned from their dumb Idols to serve the Living and True God, without feeling that the Preaching of the Gospel had done great things? Wicked men indeed might resist this conviction; they might deny this conclusion. But surely every considerate mind must allow that the Word of the Lord was *glorified* in the Conversion of these Thessalonians.

Here then is another subject for enquiry. Has the Word of the Lord been *thus* glorified in us? Has it *wrought effectually* in us? Has it turned and changed us, and proved itself to be the Word of the Lord by the evident alteration, which it has made in our hearts and lives? Perhaps it may be said, 'We have never been Gentiles. We have never served Idols. We have been always Christians. How then can such a Change as was wrought in the Thessalonians, have been produced in us?'—It is true, we have been Chris-

* 1 Thess. i. 9, 10.

tians ; so far as having belonged to the outward and visible Church can have made us Christians. But have we been Christians *within* ? Has the *inner* state answered to the outward profession ? Does it answer to it now ? Before this can be the case, there must have been as great a *moral* change in us as there was in the Thessalonians. Let us recollect, that we were by nature Gentiles *in heart*. Our soul was estranged from God, and had no pleasure in Him. And what has our practice been ? If we have been free from gross sins, and scandalous vices, yet surely we must admit that we have served divers lusts and pleasures ; that we have followed the course of “ this present evil world ; ” and have loved and served the Creature more than the Creator. And what is all this, but spiritual Idolatry ?—Have we then been turned from these things ? In these respects has a great change been wrought in us ? Have we renounced these vanities, these Idols ? Are we no longer living after the flesh, and the world ? Has the Gospel redeemed us from our vain conversation, so that we are no longer fashioning ourselves after our former lusts in our ignorance ? In a word, are we now serving the Living and True God, and waiting for his Son from heaven ? Are we spiritual Worshipers of God ? Do we daily prove our hearts before Him, and serve Him with our spirit in the Gospel of his Son ? Are we sincere Believers in that Son ? Do we depend solely on his merits and promises for pardon and strength ? Do we constantly keep in mind the account which we must give to Him as our judge ? And are we desirous only of “ winning Him,” and of “ being found in Him ? ” If the Word of the Lord have not wrought these things in our hearts ; if it have not thus turned us, and brought us to be new Creatures in comparison of what we once were, it is not as yet *glorified* in us. We may have heard of its transforming power : but we have never ourselves experienced it. We are yet strangers to its gracious and mighty operations. However it may have obtained the assent of our understanding, it has never yet reached our heart, so as to have fixed itself there, and to shed abroad its heavenly influence in our soul. Let us be assured, that the Gospel has more to do *in* us and *for* us, than we are yet aware of. God grant that it may do this ! that it may come to us, as it came to the Thessalonians, not in word

only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost ! So shall we find it, as they found it, "The Power of God unto Salvation."

Let us consider,

III. The *Fruit*, which the Gospel had produced, and still continued to produce, on these Thessalonian Converts.

The Preaching of the Word is frequently compared in Scripture to the sowing of seed. Now the intention of Sowing the Seed is that it may bring forth Fruit : and in proportion to the Fruit produced is the Husbandman rewarded for his toil and pains. Thus in proportion to the Fruit which the Gospel produces, is God's design in publishing it answered, and his Wisdom manifested. "Herein is my Father glorified (says our Saviour) that ye bear much Fruit."* The Gospel never appears so clearly to be "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God ;" as when those who profess to have received and embraced it, show forth the Fruits of it in their life and conversation. Let us see then how the Thessalonian Converts in this respect glorified the Word of God. What is the testimony which St. Paul bears to them in reference to this point ? "We give thanks to God always for you all, (says the Apostle,) making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing *your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ." "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia : for from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place *your faith* to Godward is spread abroad."—"But when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your *faith* and *Charity*, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your *faith*." "As touching *brotherly love*, ye need not that I write unto you : for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another : and indeed *ye do it* towards all the Brethren, which are in all Macedonia."—"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, *even as also ye do*." "We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is meet, because that *your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth*. So that we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God for your *patience and faith* in all your persecutions and tribulations

* John, xv. 8.

that ye endure.”*—We see from these passages, what was the Fruit, in quality and in measure, which these Thessalonians bore ; and how by bearing it they glorified the Gospel. They were distinguished by the exercise of those truly Christian Graces, *Faith, Hope, and Love*. They displayed these Fruits of the Spirit in their daily life and conversation ; and they displayed them in a very eminent degree. Their *Faith grew exceedingly*. Their *Love abounded*. And their *Hope* most signally shewed itself in the patience and perseverance, which they manifested under all their heavy trials. Nay, so great was their proficiency in these Christian attainments, that they became examples to all the Believers in the neighboring countries ; that “from them sounded out the Word of the Lord,” in these striking and blessed effects produced by it ; and even the Apostle himself glorified of them in the Churches of God.

Happy is the Preacher, who can thus appeal to the Fruits of his doctrine, as displayed in the lives of those, who profess to have embraced it ! Strong indeed is the testimony given to the Power and Excellence of the Gospel, when those who profess it, thus adorn and recommend it by their conduct.

Here then is a still further subject for personal enquiry. Do we thus adorn and glorify the Gospel ? Do we thus shew forth its power and excellence in our lives ? Do we abound in *faith, hope, and love*, those pure and genuine Fruits of true Christianity ? If the Apostle were writing to us and enforcing the exercise of these Christian Graces, could he justly say, as he said to the Thessalonians, “*even as Ye also do ?*” Let us endeavor to feel the importance of this enquiry. As Christians, we have not only our own Salvation at stake, but the honor of our divine Religion. We are required to uphold that honor ; and to this end to let it be seen in our own conduct, that the Doctrine which we hold is a Doctrine according to Godliness. We are required to be “careful in maintaining good works,” to “let our light shine before men,” to “hold forth the word of life.” Without such an agreement between our profession and our practice, far from glorifying the Gospel, we shall dishonor and disgrace it, and shall furnish occasion to those who are inclined to speak evil of it.—Besides, if we are Christians

* 1 Thess. i. 2, 3.—7, 8.—iii. 6, 7.—iv. 9, 10.—v. 11. 2 Thess. i. 3, 4.

indeed, we shall anxiously desire that other persons should become so too. If we have ourselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, it will be one of the first wishes of our heart to be instrumental in making others partakers of the like precious faith with ourselves. We cannot but desire that the Word of the Lord should have free course; that it should run and be glorified; that it should spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from place to place. There are probably some, possibly many individuals among our friends, our acquaintance, and our neighbors, in whose spiritual concerns we feel a lively interest; and for whose conversion and salvation we anxiously long. The Apostle's Exhortation in the text shews us, in this case, to what means we must primarily have recourse. We must *pray* for this blessed work. It is God only, who giveth the increase. It is the Spirit only, who can open the heart to receive, to understand, and to love the truth as it is in Jesus. There is no Teacher like Him; nor will any one learn to any real purpose, till he is thus taught of God. But in respect to this, as well as to every other Gift from above, Prayer is the appointed Instrument for obtaining it. We must not omit, we must not cease to pray for those, whose spiritual good we have at heart. In due time we may hope to reap, if we faint not. But to the efficacy of our prayers for them in secret, let us add also the benefit of our good example in their sight. Let it be our aim by a suitable, a consistent, and an irreproachable conduct to soften their prejudices, and to win them to Jesus Christ. Let them see in us a clear and a bright example of what Religion really is; that so their mistakes respecting it may be corrected. Let them see, that it leads those, who embrace it, to be kind, cheerful, and contented, to be meek, patient, and industrious. Let them see that it enlivens the Spirits, amends the tempers, and improves the dispositions: that it makes persons orderly, and submissive, and faithful in discharging the duties of their station, and ready and disposed, so far as their means may extend, to every good work. In short, let them see in our example, that true Religion is a reasonable and a happy thing; that while it elevates the affections and purifies the heart, it makes its followers happier and better, than all the rest of mankind. Thus shall we glorify the Word of the

Lord, and shall be instrumental in spreading the savor of real Christianity.

“Finally, Brethren, (in the words of the Apostle,) pray for us.” Pray for the Ministers of the Gospel, and especially for those, who minister the Word of Life to Yourselves. Pray that they may be fitted and strengthened for their office, and directed and comforted in it. Pray that the Lord’s work may be prospered in their hands; that His Word may run and be glorified through their means. Your duty and your interest require these things of you. See then, that you do them. So may you hope that a larger blessing will attend their labors; and that through the abundant Mercy of God both to you and to them, You may be their “joy and crown of rejoicing, even Ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Coming.”*

SERMON VII.

The Circumcision of the Heart.

ROMANS, ii. 28, 29.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

THE rite of circumcision was one of the sacraments of the Jewish church. It was appointed by God as the ceremony of admission into that religion. No one was allowed to partake of its ordinances and privileges, till he had first submitted to this rite; and indeed the severest threatenings were denounced on all who should refuse to comply with it. When our Saviour therefore came into the world, being born under the (Jewish) law, he submitted to this di-

* 1 Thess. ii. 19.

vinely-appointed ordinance ; because in every thing it became Him "to fulfil all righteousness," and in every respect to act as men, whose nature He had assumed, were required to act.

With respect to the design and object of the sacrament of circumcision, St. Paul tells us in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that it was both a *sign* and a *seal*. It was a *sign* to represent and teach ; a *seal* to ratify and confirm. What it *ratified* and *confirmed* was the covenant of grace. It was a "seal of the righteousness of faith." It conveyed and secured to those, who rightly received it, and complied with the purpose of the institution, a personal interest in all the spiritual promises contained in the covenant made by God with Abraham ; the chief of which were pardon of sin, peace with God, and a title to eternal life, through the merits and mediation of the promised and expected Saviour.—What this ordinance *represented* and *taught*, was the corruption of our nature and the necessity of that inward mortification of sin, and of that renewal of our heart to holiness, which is so indispensable a requisite in true religion ; and which St. Paul calls, "the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh."* Without this inward circumcision of the heart the outward circumcision of the body was of no use. Nor did this sacrament really seal the spiritual promises to any but to those, who were thus made partakers of the spiritual change, which was signified by it. This is the truth which St. Paul expressly asserts in the text, and he had great reason for asserting it. For the Jews were prone to rest in the outward ceremony, while they utterly neglected the inward grace, and to suppose that they were interested in the privileges of the covenant merely because they bore about them the external badge of it. This was a necessary consequence of the depravity of our nature, which always leads men to substitute the *form* of religion for the *power* of it, and to prefer *ceremonial* services to *spiritual* duties. It was the boast of the Jews that they were the Children of Abraham, the Heirs of the promises, the Temple of the Lord : while at the same time they were utterly destitute of that faith and holiness, which such a profession

* Col. ii. 4.

implied. They trusted that because they were circumcised, they were the favorites of Heaven ; while at the same time they were altogether strangers to that disposition of heart, to which alone the promises were given, and the favor of Heaven was limited. To correct these mistaken notions, and to lead his countrymen to a juster and more spiritual view of the subject, the Apostle here declares that "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men ; but of God."

But the Jews are not the only persons, to whom the truth contained in this passage applies. It applies to Christians also. The place which circumcision occupied in the Jewish church, baptism now occupies in the Christian. It is the sacrament which Christ has appointed for admission into his church ; and like the Jewish sacrament, for the same purpose, is both a *seal* and a *sign*. It is a *seal* of the promises of the Christian covenant. It is a *sign* of that inward and spiritual work in the heart, which alone will qualify us for partaking these promises. This work is well expressed in the words of our Church-Catechism to be "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." In other words, it is that inward mortification of sin, and that renewal of the heart to holiness, the necessity of which was signified by the rite of circumcision. We may see this point more fully stated at the end of the baptismal service of our Church, when in the concluding admonition having bidden us to "remember, that baptism does *represent* unto us our profession ;" she goes on more expressly to state the meaning of that profession, namely that we should "follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and be made like unto Him ; that as He died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptised, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."—This is the thing *signified* in baptism ; and to those only who have it, does this sacrament really become a *seal*. It ratifies and confirms the Christian promises to all those, who have put off the old man, and have put on the new man ; of which change and state of heart the great constitu-

ent parts are faith and repentance. Such persons, according to the language of the Old Testament, are "circumcised in heart;" according to that of the New, are "baptised with the Holy Ghost :"* the blessed Spirit of God being the sole Author of this glorious work in the soul.

But as was the case in the Jewish church, so it still is in the Christian. Persons are still prone to trust in the outward form, and to neglect the inward grace; to pride themselves on the sign, while they forget and overlook the thing signified. What is the ground on which many are placing their hopes of salvation, but this, that they are **CHRISTIANS**; that they have been *baptised*; and by this sacrament have been admitted into the Christian church? Being thus made partakers of the *outward seal* of the covenant, they doubt not of their title to the *spiritual privileges* of it; and are not well pleased with those who would question their right to the comforts and promises of the Gospel. To all such persons then the text may be profitably addressed. It may be useful to them to be reminded, that with a very slight alteration it opposes their notions as directly as it did those of the Jews. "For he is not a *Christian*, which is one outwardly; neither is that *Baptism* which is outward in the flesh; but he is a *Christian* which is one inwardly; and *Baptism* is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

The propriety of this application of the text is surely so obvious as to require no proofs or arguments in its support. At the same time I will offer a few considerations, which, with the divine blessing, may help to explain the truths contained in it, and to fix them more deeply in the heart.

Let us then consider what, so far as man is concerned, is the great design and end of Christianity. It is the happiness of mankind. To make men happy is the grand object which the Christian religion proposes to accomplish. But to the accomplishment of this object two things are necessary. First, men must be reconciled to God, and brought into a state of peace and favor with Him. Secondly, they must be made fit in heart and dispositions for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness. The necessity of these two things arises from the present fallen state of hu-

* Deut. xxx. 6. Luke, iii. 16.

man nature. Sin has made a breach between man and God. Before then man can be happy, this breach must be healed. Man also loves sin, and naturally has no taste or relish for holy pursuits and spiritual pleasures. Here then a great change also must be wrought in him, before he can enter Heaven and share its happiness. Now Christianity proposes a remedy for both these evils. It offers to reconcile us to God, and to change and make new our heart and nature. Who then is the true Christian; but he who uses and applies this remedy, and who, by using it, is reconciled to God, and is made a new creature? Do we not see that, so long as men are at variance with God, and love and practise what is displeasing to Him, let them be called by whatsoever name, and bear whatsoever outward marks and badges of Christianity, they cannot be *real* Christians? Though with Simon Magus they may have been baptised, yet with that miserable man they will still have "no part nor lot in the matter," so long as their "heart is not right in the sight of God." While this is the case, their baptism, their profession, their Christian name will profit them nothing. They are "yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."*

But let us go further into detail. Let us consider with more attention the particulars of that remedy which the Gospel proposes to mankind. We shall then distinctly see how little any outward thing can give to any one an interest in the promises and privileges of Christianity. The remedy provided in the Gospel, like the evil which it undertakes to cure, is two-fold.

1. The Gospel opens a way for our being reconciled to God. It represents to us the blood of Jesus Christ as the means of effecting this reconciliation. By his blood He made an acceptable sacrifice for our sins. By his one offering of himself on the cross He satisfied the divine justice, and so took out of the way that obstacle, which had prevented God from shewing mercy to man. Thus it is said that "we who sometime were afar off, are brought nigh by the blood of Jesus:" and that "we who were enemies, are reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Thus Christ is said to be "our Peace," who hath "redcom-

* Acts viii. 21. 23.

ed us to God by his blood ;” and “ was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” —This is the remedy provided.

But how is it to be used and applied ? It is to be received with humble faith, and relied upon with a believing hope. Christ is “ set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood.” And his “ Righteousness is unto all and upon all them that believe.” We are expressly told that it is “ *faith* which justifies ;” and that “ *whoever believeth shall obtain remission of sins.*” But what then is this faith ? Is it merely a fancy in the brain ; a notion in the head ; a persuasion in the mind ; an assent of the understanding ? No. It is a grace, a principle in the *heart*, deeply fixed and abiding there. It is “ with the *heart* that man believeth unto righteousness.”

The persons who really believe in Christ, are those, who feeling their guilt and misery as sinners, hear with joy of the atonement which Christ has made for sin on the cross, and with the heart put their whole trust for pardon and acceptance in his merits, mercies, and promises. These persons *are* reconciled to God. In the use of the remedy provided, their deadly wound is healed. They have peace with God through Jesus Christ : for their faith in Christ uniting them to Him, secures to them a personal interest in every thing which He had done and purchased for sinners. See then the folly and vanity of relying on any outward distinctions, on any name, any ceremony, or any rite. For none of these can do the office of faith. None of these can unite us to Christ, or reconcile us to God. Baptism is, indeed, the *seal* of the righteousness of faith. But it cannot supply the place of faith. It confirms to the *true believer* the promises of God in Christ : but it cannot give any interest in these promises to him *who believes not*. What then can baptism do without faith towards making our peace with God ? It can do nothing. Our Church has expressly told us, that one of the requisites in those who come to be baptised, is “ Faith whereby they receive the Promises of God.” Beware then how you trust in this seal of the covenant ; and undervalue and neglect that precious Faith, without which it is impossible that you can be saved, without which you must continue separated from

Christ, and consequently at enmity with the blessed God for ever and ever.

2. The Gospel opens a way for our being made holy and fit for Heaven. This object it effects through the influence and agency of the Holy Spirit, who, as the Catechism again teaches us, "sanctifies all the elect people of God." That Faith, indeed, of which we have been speaking, and which is in fact the seed of all holiness in the heart, is itself the gift and the operation of the Holy Ghost. But He does not merely sow the seed. He brings also the fruit to perfection. Having convinced the soul of sin, and led it to a simple trust on Jesus Christ for pardon, He goes on to purify and change it. Having wrought in it that "Repentance whereby we forsake sin," He goes on to deliver it more and more from the power of corruption, and to fill it with the fruits of righteousness. To this end He puts into the heart good thoughts and holy desires; stirs up in it devout affections and pious resolutions; teaches and enables it to resist the devil, to renounce the world, to withstand temptation, to crucify the flesh; and in the meantime cheers and strengthens it by divine consolations and heavenly supports. Thus is the work of sanctification advanced. The grace of the Holy Spirit is the remedy provided for the cure of our natural corruption, and for bringing the soul into that state of spiritual health and soundness, which forms its fitness for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness.

But how is this remedy to be applied and used? By yielding the heart to the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit; by seeking his help in diligent and earnest prayer, by giving ourselves up to his guidance and direction, obeying his godly motions, and complying with the suggestions which He puts into our hearts; by using the grace which He gives to us in struggling against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and thus in *His* strength getting victory over our corruptions, and cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. See then again the folly and vanity of trusting to any outward distinction. Nothing but a *real inward* change of heart, a work of grace on the soul, producing in us spiritual affections and a holy life, can make us fit for Heaven. Baptism is, indeed, the sign of this inward change; but it cannot supply the place of it. The washing with water represents the washing by the Holy Ghost; but it is

not the same thing. Far then from trusting only to the sign, seek after the thing signified. Seek after that renewal and sanctification of the heart, which alone will form your meetness for Heaven. Learn from the statement here given, the nature of true religion. It is an *inward* thing. It is a compound of faith and holiness; the work and inspiration of divine Grace. Faith is the seed, the root, the principle. Holiness is the branch, the fruit, the blessed effects produced by it. This is true Christianity. It is fixed in the heart, and works and operates in the life. It leads those, who partake of its blessed influence, to be pious and devout; to be meek, humble, and patient; to deny themselves; and to take up their cross daily; to overcome the world, and to have their conversation in Heaven. Now of such Christianity there is one particular stated in the text, which we shall do well to notice. "Its praise is not of men, but of God." True religion, such as it has been here described, has never been a favorite with the world. Men in their natural state, have never liked, approved, or commended it. How, indeed, is it possible that they should? For it opposes them at every step; it crosses them at every turn. It condemns their views, their principles, and their practices. When set before them in description, or presented to their eyes in the holy lives of its professors, they cannot but see and feel how totally it differs from *that* which they call religion, and which, consisting in forms, notions, and ordinances, allows them to indulge the flesh, to walk after the course of this world, and to serve Mammon more than God. True Religion therefore, has not, and cannot have *their* praise. In fact they hate it, and shew their hatred by speaking evil of it. They hold it up as the object of scorn and ridicule. They revile its doctrines, they slander its professors. This is the treatment, with which, in a greater or a less degree, real godliness has always met from an ungodly world, and with which, in a greater or a less degree, it must always meet from the world, so long as the world continues to be ungodly, and to lie in wickedness.

Ye, then, who may be suffering from the enmity of the world for conscience sake; ye who may be reviled and despised, because ye are faithfully serving the Lord Christ, be not surprised, "as though some strange thing had happened unto you;" for "the same afflictions are accomplished

in your brethren, which are in the world." Bear in mind, that if you are of the true circumcision, who, as St. Paul describes them, "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;"* you may indeed, have no praise of men, but you have something which infinitely surpasses all *their* praise,—the praise of God. God *now* sees and approves you, and *hereafter* will appear in your favor. He may suffer you for a season to endure reproach, but in due time He will roll it all away, and will cause your righteousness to shine forth as the sun. Let it be now your care to persevere unto the end, and to approve your heart before God. Preferring His praise to that of men, seeking the honor which cometh from Him only, walk humbly and uprightly in his sight. Seek to grow in faith and in holiness. Aim to be more simply dependant on the merits and promises of Jesus Christ. Look more steadfastly to His fulness for a supply of all your wants. Be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Confess him with your lips and in your lives before the world. And in that day, when He shall come in glory to make up his jewels, "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," He will confess you before His holy Angels, and before His Father, which is in Heaven.

But on the other hand, *what* in that day will be the state of those, who shall be found guilty of having despised and rejected the remedy provided for them in the Gospel: of those, who still remaining uncircumcised in heart, have always resisted the Holy Ghost, and notwithstanding their pretensions and privileges, as Children of the Kingdom *now*, shall *then* be found to have neither lot, nor portion among the true Israel of God:—of those, who have been Christians in nothing but in name; who partaking of the outward sign of the covenant, have been destitute of the inward grace; who have been baptised with water, but not baptised with the Holy Ghost; who have eaten of the sacramental bread and wine, but have not fed on Christ in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving:—of those, who, consulting only their own corrupt and carnal inclinations, have framed to themselves a religion suited to their own taste,

* Philip. iii. 3.

and pride, and prejudices, and have called it Christianity; a religion which consists in the shadow without the substance, in the body without the spirit, in the form without the power of godliness; which substitute ceremonial observances, and outward distinctions in the place of vital faith, and practical godliness; a religion, which allows its followers to be selfish, and worldly and covetous, to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, to serve Belial in conjunction with Christ, to honor the creature more than the Creator, to fear man rather than God.—What, I ask, in that day, will be the state of these nominal, external, unsanctified Christians? Where will be their meetness for standing before Christ? Will He own *them* for his people? Will He see in *them* the travail of his soul and be satisfied? Will He recognise in *them* his image, his likeness? Will He say to *them*, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” My brethren, need I to answer these questions? Have you not already answered them yourselves? Does not your own reason tell you, that such persons are not *true* Christians: that whatever they may now think, or say, however they may now boast of their privileges, and may plume themselves upon their fancied distinctions, they will then be treated as workers of iniquity, as enemies of Christ, as despisers of the covenant of Grace; and will be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And while reason tells you these things; what does *conscience* say? Does it convict you of being in the state, of which I speak? Does it secretly say to any one here present, “Thou art the man:” “Thou art the person, who hast the form of godliness, but art without the power of it; who professes to know God, but in works deniest Him; who callest thyself a Christian, but hast no real interest in Christ; who trustest in thy privileges, but art an enemy to all serious godliness?” If there be one, whose conscience speaks thus to him, let me earnestly say to him, Consider your ways. Consider them before it is too late; while yet there is time for repentance; while yet a door of mercy is open. Renounce your wisdom. Mortify your pride. Come as a little child to Christ, and pray to be baptized with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pray that you may become a new creature, a worshipper of God in spirit and in truth.

Pray that his kingdom may be set up in your heart ; and that being enlightened, converted, and sanctified by his Spirit, you may walk with Him in newness of life.

Do you slight this counsel ? are you offended with this friendly admonition ? Wise in your own conceits, are you too proud to be taught ? Puffed up with fleshly wisdom, will you still boast of your privileges, and say " The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we ? " Is this the case ? Then will I conclude with solemnly addressing you in the words of the prophet, " Lo, thou hast rejected the word of the Lord and what wisdom is in thee."*

SERMON VIII.

Nature and Necessity of Regeneration.

JOHN, iii. 7.

Marvel not, that I said unto Thee, ye must be born again.

THE truth contained in these words is one of the most weighty in Scripture : one which concerns us all, and requires the deepest attention. May God dispose our hearts to attend to it with seriousness, humility, and impartiality ! The way in which we receive the doctrine of the *New Birth* is one of the clearest tests of the pride, or the humility of our heart ; of its teachable, or unteachable, of its prejudiced, or unprejudiced state. For the better understanding of the subject, let us shortly review the circumstances which stand connected with the text.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and ruler of the Jews ; a person of the strictest sect, and highest authority among them, having heard of the miracles which Jesus wrought ; and being convinced that He could work them only through the power of God, was desirous of being acquainted with the

* Jeremiah, viii. 9.

doctrines which He taught. He accordingly came to Him, and from fear either of discovery, or of interruption, came to Him by night. Addressing Him in terms of great respect, he professed his conviction that He was a teacher come from God : "for no man (added he) can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus, without any delay, proceeded to put his profession to the test. He proceeded to try, whether he was so convinced of his divine mission as implicitly to receive the doctrines which He taught, however opposed they might be to human prejudice, and human pride. In a most solemn, and decisive manner He said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This declaration astonished the Pharisee, who, taking the new birth, of which our Lord spoke, in a literal sense, asked with surprise, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" But the birth, to which Christ referred, as He went on to shew, was not a literal, but a spiritual birth. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The birth which He meant was a birth, of which the application of water was the figurative emblem, or sign, but which was really to be effected by the agency of the Spirit of God. It was in short, an inward and a spiritual change, a change of heart and nature, by the influence of the Holy Spirit; the reason and necessity for which our Lord immediately adduces, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."—This statement so clearly pointed out the nature and necessity of the new birth, to which he alluded; that He directly adds in the text, "Marvel not, that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." As if he had said, 'Be not surprised at my assertion. That new birth, which as a teacher sent from God I declare to be so indispensably necessary to salvation, that without it, no man can see or enter the kingdom of God, contains nothing in itself impossible; nothing contradictory; nothing in fact, but what is perfectly agreeably to reason, to scripture, and to experience; nothing but what you as a master in Israel might easily have known, and ought to understand.'

In discoursing farther on the text, thus explained, I shall enter more fully,

I. On the doctrine contained in it.

II. On the agreement of this doctrine with scripture, reason, and facts.

I. The doctrine contained in the text is comprehended in these words "Ye must be born again."

It has been already observed, that the expression of being "born again," or of undergoing a "new birth," is not to be taken in a literal sense. The meaning is figurative; and the change intended by it, is a spiritual change, of which the Spirit of God is the efficient author and cause. At the same time we cannot but suppose that the Holy Ghost, in making choice of this figurative language to convey his meaning, has selected that which was best adapted to his purpose, and consequently that, though the birth spoken of is not a literal birth, yet the change figured by it, in some particular respects resembles a "new birth;" and the person so spiritually changed, may, with a peculiar propriety be said to have been "born again." In explaining the nature of this change we should not altogether lose sight of the image by which it is represented; nor from the fear of overstraining the figurative language, abstain from a proper, and legitimate use of it.

Birth implies previous life, though the beginning of it may have been small, and imperceptible; while the person, who is born, enters on a new stage and scene of action, suited to the life which he has received, to the faculties bestowed on him, and to the place, and the station which he is designed to fill. This idea will serve to illustrate and explain the nature of that change of which we are speaking.

The new, or spiritual birth, pre-supposes the existence of a new, or spiritual life. He who is born of the Spirit, has received of the Spirit a new principle of life; though at what time, or in what manner this principle may have been communicated to the soul, we may be utterly ignorant. "The wind," (says our Lord in the verse following the text) "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The beginning of spiritual life—*how* or *when* the Spirit may have quickened the soul,—we pretend not to define; but *this* we

assert, that every one, who is born of the Spirit, has been quickened by the Spirit ; and is partaker of a spiritual life, (for " that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit ;") and now entering on a new stage and scene of action, he gives evident proof of the spiritual change which has taken place within. Like the new-born babe he now seeks for spiritual sustenance, " even the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby." His eyes are now opened to discern spiritual objects ; his ears to listen to spiritual truths ; his lips to utter spiritual language. He is no longer carnally-minded, but spiritually-minded : no longer walks in the flesh, but in the Spirit. His desires are now spiritual. They are directed to those objects which the Spirit has revealed, and teaches us to value. His hopes and fears are spiritual. Instead of being a formal, he is become a spiritual worshipper of God. He worships Him in spirit, and in truth. Instead of being as he once was, blind, and ignorant in respect to those things which are really good, and averse from following them, he is now spiritually enlightened to discern the true riches, and eager, and earnest, and constant in pursuing them. In a word how great a change is wrought ! Sin, once the delight and idol of the soul, is hated and cast out. Holiness is loved, and followed. Christ who before was disregarded, is esteemed, and accounted precious. The sinner, once dead in trespasses and sins, now lives to God ; fears, serves, and honors Him ; delights in his law ; rejoices in his Gospel ; and reveres Him, as a kind and loving Father.—This is the man " who is born again." This is the change produced by the " new birth."

But the text not only illustrates the Nature of this change, it declares also the Necessity for it. " Ye must be born again." Christ does not say, ' ye may be born again,' or ' ye ought to be born again ;' or ' it would be better, and happier for you'—but " Ye must."—" I said unto thee, ye must be born again." And when had He said thus to Nicodemus ? When He had just told him, " that except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This spiritual change is indispensably necessary to salvation ; so necessary that there can be no salvation without it. If a man would see, would enter into the kingdom of God, he must be born again. And what are we to under-

stand by the expression of "the kingdom of God?" Not merely His kingdom in heaven, but His kingdom also on earth. In heaven God's kingdom will be perfected in glory, security, and felicity. But it is begun on earth. It is set up, and established in this world: and all, who will share the blessings of it hereafter, must become subjects of it here. Here they must enter into it; here they must acquire a taste for its peculiar pleasures and duties. But these pleasures, and these duties, like the kingdom to which they belong, are of a spiritual nature. The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. Its pleasures are spiritual. Its duties are spiritual. None, therefore, but those who are spiritually alive, born of the Spirit, can belong to this kingdom. None others can enter into it, and become subjects of it: for none others in fact can see it: none others can discern its beauty, excellence, and value: none others can relish the pleasures belonging to it, nor take any delight in the duties which it prescribes. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." Water cannot rise higher than the spring from which it flows. Man, "in the flesh," in his natural, unrenewed state, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Thus, as the Apostle says, "they that are in the flesh, cannot please God."* They cannot become his subjects; they cannot enter into, nor even see his kingdom. Hence results the Necessity of this, "New Birth," this spiritual change. Hence it is, that if ye would be saved, if ye would now live unto God, and hereafter live with Him, "ye must be born again."

Such is the doctrine contained in the text. Let us next consider,

II. Its agreement, with Scripture, Reason, and Facts. When our Lord in this passage insisted on the Necessity of the New Birth, and intimated the Nature of the change of which he spoke, Nicodemus expressed his astonishment at the doctrine. But how did Christ address him in the text? "Marvel not, that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." And on the Pharisee's afterwards asking, "how can these things be?" Jesus replied, "art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Nicodemus spoke of it as a

* Romans, viii. 8.

doctrine new, strange, and irrational. But Christ represented it in a very different light. He spoke of it throughout his discourse, as a doctrine which had nothing mysterious or wonderful in it ; and which Nicodemus ought to have known. In fact it is a doctrine, which the Scriptures plainly teach ; which Reason fully approves ; and which Facts strikingly confirm. Let us attend to these three points in order.

The doctrine in the text is a doctrine which the Scriptures plainly teach ; the writings of the Old Testament, as well as those of the New ; for in this respect there is no difference between them. They both teach the same doctrines. The only difference is, that the New Testament generally inculcates with clearness and decision those truths, which the Old Testament reveals in a manner obscure and shadowy, and oftentimes by inference, rather than by direct, and open statement. But on the point before us, the writings of the Old Testament are sufficiently plain, and explicit ; for otherwise Nicodemus could not have been expected to know the doctrine in question. In fact when we are told in the first chapter of Genesis, that man was originally created in the image, and after the likeness of God, that is, in righteousness and true holiness ; and when, in the fourth chapter, we read that Adam after the fall begat a son in *his own* image, after *his own* likeness ; nothing can be plainer, than that a great spiritual change, equivalent to a new birth, is necessary in order to fit mankind for that happiness, and for those services, for which he was originally designed. Again, when we read such declarations as the following ; “ the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”—“ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”—“ How abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water.”—“ God looked from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God: Every one of them is gone back ; they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no not one.”*—I say, when we read such declarations as these, and compare them with the descriptions given of true religion, which represent it as a spiritual service ; as truth in the inward parts ; as consisting

* Genesis, viii. 21. Jerem. xvii. 9. Job, xv. 16. Psalm, liii. 2, 3.

in the fear and love of God, in a desire of pleasing him, in a rejoicing in the light of his countenance ; what can be more evident, than that the heart of man must be spiritually renewed, before it can be the seat of true religion ? What are the commands of the Old Testament, “ Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.”—“ Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ;” that is inwardly in the heart. “ Cast away from you all your transgressions and make you a new heart, and a new spirit ; for why will ye die ?” * Surely the doctrine contained in these commands, differs but little from that contained in the text, “ ye must be born again.”—Look next at the promises in reference to these commands. “ The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed after thee, to love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”—And again, “ then will I sprinkle clean water upon you ; and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” † Surely the change promised to be wrought in these passages is nothing less than a new birth by the Spirit of God. Why then should Nicodemus have *marvelled* at the doctrine in the text ? Why should he have said, “ how can these things be ?” He would not have so marvelled, and so said, had he searched and known the Scriptures. Why then should any of us be surprised at this doctrine ? Why should we marvel at the thought of being born again ? Why should we question the Nature, or the Necessity of this change ? Let us search the Scriptures, and attend to them, and we shall see no cause for wonder, or for doubt. In addition to the writings of the Old Testament we have those of the New ; we have the decisive testimony of Christ himself in this discourse with Nicodemus ; we have numberless passages in the Gospels and the Epistles bearing on the same point. Take the following as a specimen. “ As ma-

* Duet. x. 16. Isaiah, l. 16. Ezek. xviii. 31.
Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 27.

† Duet. xxx. 6.

ny as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God ; even to them that believe on his name ; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—“ You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”—“ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”—And to mention only one more passage.—“ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away : behold, all things are become new.”*

I told you, my brethren, at the beginning of my discourse, that the statement of this doctrine would be a trial of your heart, of its humbled, or unhumbled state ; of its disposition to be taught of God, or to set up its own vain notions in opposition to His truths. For it is a doctrine, which is directly levelled at the pride of our hearts, and calculated to excite our prejudices and to provoke our reasonings against it. But at the same time it is a doctrine which reason rightly exercised cannot but approve. Man is evidently far gone from original righteousness. He is naturally incapable of rendering to God spiritual service. “ Being born of the flesh, he is flesh.” He is utterly indisposed to love and obey God. He clearly loves sin, and folly, and the world, and self. These are the idols, whom he serves, and honors. Do we not all know, and see, and feel this to be the case ? Are we not sensible that we are not now born in that moral likeness, in that spiritual image of God, in which man was at first created ? What then can be more *reasonable* than that a religion, which professes to recover us from the consequences and evils of sin, and to bring us back to the favor, and presence of God, should make provision for recovering us to His image and likeness ; and should insist upon such a recovery as an indispensable requisite to our “salvation ? Surely in this view, “ye must be born again” is a sentiment the most agreeable to reason, the most plain and level to our understanding. And when God, who first created man, reserves to Himself the power of this new creation ; when He who first said, “let us make man, in our image, after our likeness,” should now claim the prerogative of restoring him to that image, and likeness : when the Spirit of God, who is the author, and giver of all life,

* John, i. 12, 13. Ephes. ii. 1. 1 John, v. 1, 2. 2 Cor. v. 17.

should at his will quicken the spiritually dead, and impart to them a new principle of life.—Is there any thing in all this dispensation, to which reason, *rightly exercised*, can object? No, she approves it; she sees in it the power, and the wisdom of God. She consents to it as good. She acquiesces in it as right. She rejoices in it as a dispensation best adapted to the wants of man, and to the glory of God.

And now I might next appeal to the evidence of *Facts*; and shew how *they* confirm the doctrine, as it has been explained. But the time will not admit of my entering far into this subject, I will, therefore, simply state the question thus. Look at those persons in your own immediate neighborhood, or among the circle of your acquaintance, whom in your conscience you believe to be the most faithful servants, the most spiritual worshippers of God, living the most decidedly under the influence of a religious principle, and producing the most evident fruits of righteousness, and true holiness. Look, I say, at such persons. Apply to them. Refer the matter to their decision. Ask them what they think of the doctrine in the text? Do they believe in the Necessity of a new, and spiritual birth? Do they believe that a man must be born again of the Spirit, in the way that has been stated, before he can serve God acceptably, and can offer up spiritual sacrifices? Put these enquiries to them. And I will shew you what their answer will be. They will tell you that they are themselves living witnesses to the truth of this doctrine; that they know by *experience* the nature, and the necessity of a new birth unto righteousness; that till they were quickened by the holy Spirit of God, they were themselves dead in sin, ignorant of God, and blind to spiritual things. They will tell you that whatever spiritual light, or life, they now have; whatever disposition to fear, and love God; whatever desire after Jesus Christ, and his salvation; whatever power to obey, serve, and honor Him,—that for all these things they are indebted solely to the regenerating influences of the Spirit, by whom they “have been begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

And now, my brethren, what will *you* say to these things? I have explained to you the Nature of that spiritual change, which is intended by the expression of being “born again.”

I have pointed out to you the Necessity for it. I have shewn you that this is the doctrine of Scripture ; that it is agreeable to Reason ; that it is confirmed by Facts, and Experience. And now what do *you* say to these things ? Are you yourselves the subjects of this change ? Have you already experienced it ? Are you born of the Spirit ? These are questions of very serious moment, and which you are required very seriously to answer to your own hearts, and consciences, for there is no alternative in this matter. There is no *choice* left to you, “ye *must* be born again.” Till this be the case with you, you cannot *enter* into, you cannot *see* the kingdom of God. You may have some *notion* of what true religion should be ; but you have no *experience* of what it really is. You may have *heard* of Jesus Christ, but you have not *so seen* Him, as to believe on Him. You may have the body, the form of godliness ; but you are destitute of its spirit, its power. You may belong to the outward, visible church of God, but you have as yet nothing to do with his inward, and invisible kingdom.—Perhaps you will say, ‘ We have been baptized unto Christ, we have been washed in the laver of regeneration, and were we not at that time, and in that ordinance born again ? ’ My brethren, you may, indeed, have been partakers of this ordinance, and by it may have been admitted into the external fellowship of Christ’s religion. You may have been baptized with water ; but have you also been baptized with the Holy Ghost ? The outward washing with water is but the sign, and emblem of that inward washing by the Spirit, of that “ death unto sin,” and that “ new birth unto righteousness,” which is real regeneration. Rest not then in the outward ordinance, nor deceive yourselves with the hope that you are thus “ born again.” Think not because you may have been baptized with water, that *therefore* you are *necessarily* baptized with the Holy Ghost. You might as reasonably urge that every Israelite who was circumcised in the flesh, was also necessarily circumcised in heart. Correct so erroneous an opinion. Give no credit, no countenance to so false, and unscriptural a position.—If indeed you will persist in retaining this notion, if you will still maintain that at baptism you received the seed of spiritual life : what, I would ask, has been the product ? Has the seed sprung up, and grown, and budded, and blossomed, and brought much,

or even any fruit, to perfection? If it has, well. If you are now a spiritual worshipper of God, and are living a spiritual life by faith in His Son, you may justly conclude that you have been born of the Spirit, whether at baptism, or at some other period. But if you are still carnally-minded, and are living a carnal life, you may be sure, that whenever you may have been baptized with water, you are still a stranger to the baptism of the Holy Ghost; you are still unrenewed, uncircumcised in heart, and with Nicodemus *must* be born again.—And will you quietly continue in this state of death, and sin? Will you boast of being a Christian, while you have nothing belonging to one but the name? “Awake, thou, that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” O that while I am speaking, the Spirit, the blessed Author of the glorious change, who seeth where He listeth, and quickeneth whom He will, would quicken some souls among us, and by his powerful energies would call forth into life some hearts, hitherto lying dead in trespasses, and sins! One of the first fruits and marks of such a work would be a secret conviction of the truth and the reality of this change of which we speak; a conviction producing an inward *desire* to partake of it. My brethren, have any of you this conviction? Do you find this desire in you? Welcome, O welcome the beginnings of grace in your soul. Quench not the ~~sacred~~ light. It may be the dawn of that day which will never end; the forerunner of that sun, which will never go down. Strive to impress, and increase this conviction on your heart. Turn your desire into prayer. Pray “that you may be born again;” that you may experience in your own soul the power of renewing grace; that you may know what it is to have the heart quickened, enlightened, regenerated, by the Spirit of God. Persevere in such prayers. Doubt not of their being heard, and answered. Ask all in the name of Jesus Christ; and rely upon that most comfortable promise, “God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”

SERMON IX.

Adoption the Fruit of Faith and Regeneration.

JOHN, i. 12, 13.

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name : which were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the flesh, nor of the Will of man, but of God.

IT is the great and peculiar privilege of true Christians that they "have received the adoption of sons," have been taken "into the household of God," and "have a name and a place in his family." Being made members of Christ, they are become the children of God. It is this privilege, of which St. John speaks in the text. He tells us of some, who had "power to become the Sons of God :"; and he tells us also *whence* they had obtained this power ; *by what means* they were become the Sons of God. On this point indeed he enters very fully into particulars. So that in discussing on this passage, I shall naturally be led to enlarge on the previous *Causes*, by which our adoption into the family of God under the christian covenant is brought about and accomplished.

In speaking indeed of the *Causes* by which our adoption is accomplished, it must ever be remembered that this privilege, like every other blessing of redemption, springs solely from the spontaneous mercy and the rich loving-kindness of the Lord. Admission into his family is exclusively the work and the gift of God. His grace is the first moving *Cause* of our adoption : and if we receive this adoption, it is solely because He freely bestows it on us. Such is the view exhibited in the text. Those who had the power to become the Sons of God are described as having *received* this power from Him. It is expressly said, that He "*gave it to them.*" Once children of wrath, are they now children of grace ? Once children of darkness, are they now children of light ? Once children of disobedience, the slaves of sin and Satan, are

they now the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty? *Whence* did they obtain this privilege? *How* was this glorious change in their state effected? Did they merit or purchase it for themselves? Did they procure it by their own wisdom, power, or goodness? No. God "who is rich in mercy, of his great love wherewith He loved them, quickened them when dead in trespasses and sins;" "justified them freely by his grace;" and thus "translated them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son."—But God in thus fulfilling the purposes of his love works by means. He ordains instruments for the accomplishing of his ends. He employs means for bringing sinners into his family. And these instruments, these means, which He has thus ordained and employs, may be considered as secondary and subservient *Causes* in effecting the great work of our adoption.—Such are the *Causes*, on which I purpose to enlarge; and which the text describes as two;

I. The one, *immediate*, which is *Faith*: "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name."

II. The other *remote*, which is *Regeneration*: "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God."

My brethren, may the Spirit of God be with us in our meditations on this important and interesting subject!

I. In considering *Faith*, as the *immediate Cause* of our adoption into the family of God we may advert, first

To the particular act or exercise of faith here meant, and secondly

To the way in which it tends to produce the effect ascribed to it.

I. Faith in order to be of any avail in the work of our redemption, must be placed in the heart. This alone can be a saving faith: and this alone is the faith, of which we here speak: not an historical, not a doctrinal, not a notional belief; but a living, a vital faith in the heart; for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The object of faith is the word of God. Faith generally has respect to every thing which God has either revealed or promised. But the particular act of faith, to which our present attention is directed, has respect to Jesus Christ. He exclusively is the object of that faith, by which we receive the

adoption of sons. "For we are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ."*—And St. John tells us in the text, that the persons to whom Christ "gives power to become the Sons of God, are those who *believe on his Name.*" Now the *Name* of Christ signifies Christ himself; or rather Christ in the discharge of those offices, which on our account He has assumed: for His Names are descriptive of His offices. He is Emmanuel: for "he is God with us"—He is the True Light; "for He lighteth every man, that cometh into the world." He is "Jesus," for "He shall save his people from their sins." "He is the Lamb of God;" for He "taketh away the sin of the world." He is "the Lord our righteousness," for "in Him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." These are some of the *Names* of Christ; and to believe on his Name, is to believe on Him as discharging for us those offices, which these Names describe; to trust in Him as the Saviour, the Lamb of God, the Lord our righteousness.—But there is one expression in the text, which will convey a still clearer idea of that particular exercise of Faith, which we are now considering. The apostle says, "To as many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God." Believing in Christ is here represented by *receiving Him*. This expression of *receiving* evidently implies the idea of a gift: and such is the view in which Christ is frequently exhibited in Scripture. He is spoken of as a gift. God gives to us his Son. He offers Him to us in all his offices, to enlighten, justify, and save us. To believe then on the Son is to receive this gift. It is humbly and thankfully to acquiesce in the salvation provided; it is cordially to appropriate to ourselves the blessings held out to us: it is from the heart to take Jesus Christ as "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."—This is that act and exercise of Faith, by which we become the children of God.

It must be obvious that this Faith pre-supposes the existence of several important particulars. Before a person could have been induced thus to receive Christ, there must have been a *Conviction* of sin and some measure of consequent alarm excited within him. He must have so seen

* Gal. iii. 26.

and felt his guilt and danger as a sinner, as to have utterly renounced his own righteousness, and for ever to have given up the hope of saving himself by his own works.—There must have been a *Consciousness* of his own spiritual blindness and weakness wrought in his soul. He must have so felt his own ignorance, as to be willing to be taught from above ; so experienced his own helplessness, as to be thankful for the promise of supernatural strength—There must have been a *Distaste* for sin, and a strong wish to break off from it produced in his heart. He must have so groaned under the burden of a depraved and corrupted nature, as anxiously to have desired deliverance from it.—There must have been a *Persuasion* wrought in his mind, of the sufficiency of Christ, of the certainty and suitableness of the salvation provided in Him : for without such a *Persuasion* how could the heart have been induced to accept His mediation, and to embrace His offers. In short, pride must have been humbled ; Self must have been dethroned ; spiritual apprehensions of sin must have been acquired ; spiritual views of Christ must have been obtained ; before there could have been that cordial acquiescence in his salvation, that personal appropriation of Him to the soul in all his offices, which the act of receiving Him implies ; and which, in fact, is that very exercise of Faith, by which our adoption into the family of God is accomplished. Let us advert

Secondly, To the way in which this Faith tends to produce the effect ascribed to it.

This receiving of Christ, this act of believing on Him, of which we speak, is the consent of the soul to the covenant of grace. And no sooner does the soul yield this consent, than its union with Christ is accomplished. The act of Faith is virtually the act of union. For whenever the soul thus surrenders itself without reserve to Christ, he takes it into union with Himself. This union is variously represented in Scripture, and illustrated by many different comparisons. At one time it is likened to the engrafting of a branch into the tree : at another to the incorporation of a limb into the body. But there is no resemblance more frequently employed on this subject than the marriage union ; “ This” says the apostle, speaking of the union, which is effected by marriage, “ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning

Christ and his church.”* Christ is the bridegroom of his church, the husband of his people : and all true believers are married unto Him, and thus by the strongest and tenderest of all ties, are united to Him. And it is from this union, thus effected, and accomplished by faith, that all their interest in the blessings of the Gospel spring. They are “accepted in the Beloved,” and stand “complete in Him.” Having united them to Himself, He regards and treats them as such an union imports. He takes their debts upon Himself and confers his riches on them. He washes them from their sins in his own blood, and clothes them in the robe of his own righteousness. Thus being pardoned through his sufferings, and justified through his obedience, they are accounted as dear children in Him, are admitted as one with Him into the family of God, and are invested with all the privileges, which that high distinction involves. When the prodigal returned to his father’s home ; not only did he meet with every token of forgiveness and reconciliation ; but in every respect he was welcomed and treated as a son ; a son, who had been “dead, but was alive again ;” who had been “lost, but was found.”

Thus Faith tends to produce the effect ascribed to it. By uniting the soul to Christ, it secures to it a name and a place among the children of God ; and so may be justly regarded as the *immediate Cause* by which our adoption is accomplished. We consider

II. The *remote Cause* of this effect, *Regeneration*.—St. John represents those who through faith have power to become the sons of God, not only as having believed on his name, but also as having been “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—That the birth, which the apostle here imputes to them was not their natural and original birth, is evident from the manner in which he speaks of it. That birth was of blood, on of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man. But the birth of which the apostle speaks was not of any of these, but “of God.” Consequently it was another and a later birth, a second or a new birth, or to make use of another term, a *Regeneration*. In discussing then the subject before us, let us here also advert to two things ; First

* Ephes. v. 32.

To the nature of this new birth ; and Secondly

To the way in which it tends to produce the effect ascribed to it.

The nature of this new birth will be most readily perceived from the apostle's account of its author and its origin. —We have already seen, that he tells whence it is not, and whence it is.—“ It is *not* of blood.” This new birth is not produced by natural generation; neither is it communicated by natural descent. No man inherits, or can inherit it, from his natural parents. His relation to any particular family gives him no preference or title to it—*Neither* is it of “ the will of the flesh.” This regeneration is not the consequence of any man's own natural choice, nor of any previous disposition or desire for it. The flesh, which is the corrupt natural state, has no inclination for being born again, nor indeed has any knowledge or conception of the change denoted by this expression—*Neither* is it of “ the will of man.” No man can impart this new birth to another. However desirous, however anxious he may be that any particular individual should partake of it, he is utterly unable to secure the accomplishment of his wish. So far from being competent to *will*, he is not even able to *conjecture*, to what persons this blessing shall be ultimately dispensed. But if Regeneration be not “ of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,” whence is it? It is “ of God ;” God is the sole Author of the new birth. He dispenses it according to his sovereign will, and accomplishes it by the efficacy of his almighty power. The great agent in accomplishing it is the Spirit, who by His immediate operation on the soul produces this important change : for we are “ born again of the Spirit.” And from this account then of the *origin* of Regeneration we may more readily perceive its *nature*. It is a supernatural, a divine, a spiritual birth. It is the communication of a supernatural principle ; the infusion of a divine nature ; the insertion of a spiritual life. “ That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The man who is thus “ born of God,” is a “ new creature.” He has received into his heart a heavenly seed, which, partaking of the nature of its high original, has a tendency to produce all holy and heavenly affections in the soul, to repair its spiritual decays, and to renew it to that image and like-

ness of God, which it first lost by sin. This is Regeneration. Let us advert then, Secondly

To the way in which it tends to produce the effect ascribed to it. This way is obvious. For that very Faith, by which we receive the adoption of sons, is itself the consequence and the fruit of regenerating grace. No man will truly believe on the name of the Son of God, but he who is a partaker of that new and heavenly nature which this new birth imparts. St. John expressly says, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."* Unless there is first this spiritual birth, there can be no true and saving faith. For how can a man with the heart believe unto righteousness, while the heart is still in an unrenewed and a carnal state? In this state the heart is incapable of believing. It neither feels, nor apprehends its own real dangers and wants. It has no spiritual sight of Christ. It perceives not His excellency. It desires not His favor. How then can it believe on Him? In support of this reasoning let us call to mind those several important particulars, the previous existence of which, as we have seen, is essential to the production of a true and living Faith, namely that conviction of guilt and fear of its awful consequences: that consciousness of blindness and weakness: that willingness to be taught and strengthened from above: that distaste for sin, and desire of deliverance from it: that persuasion of the sufficiency of Christ, and of the suitableness of his salvation. Can these things exist in any, but in a regenerate mind: in a mind enlightened, humbled, influenced by the Spirit of God? No; it is impossible. No soul which is not born again of the Spirit, can have these spiritual convictions, feelings, fears, and desires. No soul therefore which is not born again of the Spirit, can have Faith. —Thus Regeneration tends to produce the effect ascribed to it. Adoption is the consequence of union with Christ. This union is accomplished by Faith; and Faith itself is the fruit of regenerating Grace. Those persons to whom, on receiving Christ, "He gave power to become the sons of God, were" first "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Their believing on his name was the result of their new birth:

* 1 John, v. 1.

and thus their Regeneration by the Spirit of God was the Cause, however remote, of their adoption into His family.

Such is the doctrine unfolded in the text. On a review of it, what is the first feeling excited in the mind, but admiration at the wonderful provision made for our perishing souls ; at the suitableness and the sufficiency of that provision. "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !" How "well ordered in all things and sure" is that covenant of grace, wherein He has "abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence !" In bringing back sinners to his family, and in restoring to them a name and a place among his sons and daughters, He has taken effectual care that none shall be admitted to this glorious privilege, who are not first made meet for the duties and enjoyments of it. He has so constituted the method of salvation, that none can receive the adoption of sons, but those who are previously born again of His Spirit ; and who by this new birth have been made partakers of that holy nature, which both qualifies and disposes them for discharging the offices, and for sharing the consolations of children. Those whom He adopts, He first regenerates : While one of the necessary effects of this Regeneration is to lead them sooner or later to that exercise of Faith in Jesus Christ, by which alone their adoption is brought about and completed. All that are adopted have been regenerated : all that are regenerated will be adopted. These great privileges of Christianity are inseparably united together ; while Faith in Christ is that one connecting medium, by which the union is at first effected and afterwards preserved.

Here then is an important ground for self-examination and enquiry. Would we know whether we have been regenerated by the Spirit of God, whether we have received the adoption of Sons ; the point for consideration is this, Have we Faith in Jesus Christ ? None can truly believe in Him, who are not born of God : while to as many as receive Him, to them gives he power to become the Sons of God. So that Faith in Christ is at once an evidence of our Regeneration, as well as a proof of our adoption. If we have this Faith we are undoubtedly born of God, and as undoubtedly admitted into his family ; we are regenerated and made His children by adoption and grace. Have we then this Faith in Jesus Christ ? Do we believe in His name ?

Do we cordially receive Him as freely given to us of God in all his offices, as an unspeakable gift, precious in our eyes, and dear to our hearts? Let us again call to mind those several important particulars, of which this Faith already presupposes the existence; and see what experience we ourselves have of them.

1st. What do we know of conviction of sin? Has the Spirit of God wrought this gracious work in our souls? Has He opened our understanding to see, and our hearts to feel, our guilt and misery as sinners? Has he so discovered to us the sinfulness of our nature and conduct: has he so impressed us with an apprehension of the punishment which we have justly incurred, as to convince us of the necessity of fleeing from the wrath to come, and of seeking some better refuge than any which our own merits, or doings, or resolutions can provide? In a word, have we ever been brought seriously and earnestly to put to ourselves this most important question, What shall I do to be saved?

2d. Have we been made sensible of our own spiritual blindness and weakness; of our natural ignorance about spiritual things; and of our utter insufficiency of ourselves to think or to do any thing that is good? Have we felt our need of divine teaching? Under an humbling consciousness of the darkness and hardness of our minds, have we been willing to be enlightened with the wisdom which is from above; and like little children to be led into the knowledge and love of the truth? Have we felt our need of divine strength? Deeply experiencing our own inability to serve God with our spirit, and to offer to him spiritual sacrifices, have we longed for supernatural help, have we desired to be strengthened with might from above in the inner man?

3d. Has the love of sin been broken in our hearts? Have we so seen the evil of our depraved nature, as to be dissatisfied with it? Have we so felt the burden of sinful habits as to have groaned under their weight? Have we been ashamed and grieved at the recollection of the many iniquities which we have committed, and have we looked back with contrition and regret on the influence which sin has had over our wills and affections? Have we been convinced of the beauty of holiness? Have we conceived a taste for spiritual duties and pleasures? Have we longed to be releas-

ed from the slavery of corruption, and to enjoy that liberty, which consists in a freedom from the power of sin ?

4th. What have been our views of Jesus Christ, and of His sufficiency in respect to these our many spiritual wants ? Have we seen His fulness as revealed to us in the gospel ? Have we been persuaded that He is able to bestow on us that pardon and peace, that wisdom and strength, that liberty and holiness, of which we stand in need ?—Under this persuasion have we come to Him for these spiritual blessings ? Have we committed ourselves, our souls and all their interests, to His mercy and power, and faithfulness ?—Are we now actually living in dependance upon Him, as our prophet, priest, and king, for the supply of all our wants, for support under all our temptations, for direction in all our difficulties, for victory over all our enemies ? In His blood are we trusting for forgiveness ? In His strength are we struggling against sin ? In His steps are we endeavoring to walk ?

My brethren, have such been the feelings, and convictions, the wishes and desires, which have been wrought in our souls ? Is such the present state and disposition of our heart ? Then have we Faith in Christ. Then have we received Him, and have believed in His name. And what is the conclusion which follows ? Then are we born of God and are adopted into His family. This is a conclusion, which we cannot resist, without resisting the Scriptures themselves. Why indeed should we attempt to resist it ? If the Spirit of God in the word bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, why should we doubt or oppose this testimony ? Rather let us thankfully receive it. Rather let us rejoice in our privilege. Bearing in mind the grace which has been vouchsafed to us, and the dignity to which we have been raised, let us strive to live worthy of our holy calling ; and labor to shew that we are indeed the regenerated and adopted children of God by walking in His Spirit, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness.

On the other hand, does conscience bear witness against us ? In reference to the questions which have been put, does it secretly say to any of us, you know nothing of all these things. “ You are a stranger to all these feelings, convictions, and desires.”—Then it is plain, that you have not Faith in Christ : and being destitute of Faith, you are not

the child of God. This is a conclusion as certain as the one which we before considered. You may deny, but you cannot refute it. You may disbelieve, but you cannot set it aside. The testimony is sure. You believe not in Christ : therefore you are still in your sins ; still in the flesh, and consequently as yet shut out from the family of God. You are neither regenerated by His Spirit, nor adopted by His Grace. O consider, before it is too late, the awful misery of such an apostate condition. Humbly cast yourself before the throne of mercy, and earnestly pray for a blessing from above. Pray that you may be born of God. Pray that you may have Faith to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to believe in His name. Pray that you may have power to become the child of God. And may the Lord both teach you to pray, and send you an answer of peace, for His name and His mercies' sake !

SERMON X.

The Love of God in Redemption.

JOHN, iii. 16.

For God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

THE great fundamental truths of the Gospel are few and simple, easily understood and readily remembered. At the same time, because they are fundamental, because they lie at the very foundation of our faith and practice, they cannot be too clearly explained, or too frequently inculcated. Those who know their value, will never be weary of hearing them stated ; for " they love the joyful sound : " while such as are satiated or disgusted with the repetition of them, plainly shew that they have never as yet heard or understood them to any real purpose. I shall therefore deem no apology necessary for leading you to a

consideration of those plain, but momentous truths, which the words of Christ Himself in the text suggest to us. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." And may the Spirit of Christ be so present with us in discoursing on these words, that the Truths suggested by them may come home to all our hearts with a savor, an energy, and an unction which we have never felt before !

The *First* great Truth, of which the Text reminds us, is this, that the Love of God is the prime, moving cause of our Salvation. As it is true of every individual among us, that if we now love God, "it is because He first loved us :—" that if we are now walking in newness of life, it is because "God, who is rich in mercy, of his great love wherewith He loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ :—" so it is equally true of the whole scheme of Redemption in general, that it is altogether the effect and the result of the Love of God. It was because God loved the world, that He provided a ransom, a salvation for it.—And of what nature was this Love ? It was not a Love of approbation, and complacency. God could not approve the world, and regard it with pleasure and affection. For it was an evil world, a world lying in wickedness, a guilty, a rebellious, an apostate world. There was nothing in the state of the world, which could recommend it to the favor of God, or make it an object, which He could regard with satisfaction and delight. Neither was there any thing in it, which could *prospectively* attract his love. It could make Him no suitable return. "Our goodness reacheth not unto God." Infinitely blessed and glorious in Himself, He stood in need of nothing in this world, which might add to His essential happiness and glory. Had the world perished for ever, His blessedness would not have been lessened. Instead of devising a way of saving this world, He might, with one almighty word, have created a thousand worlds superior to it in every respect, surpassing it in beauty and excellence, and free from every taint and possibility of evil.—Of what kind then was His Love ? It was a Love of pity and compassion. God pitied the world : and pity is akin to love. He saw its beauty marred ; its glory extinguished ; its happiness destroyed. He saw the creatures, whom He had made, sunk and debased in sin ;

his own blessed image effaced from their soul ; heaven shut for ever against them ; hell opened to receive them ; misery and ruin their portion for ever. He saw all these things, and He was moved with compassion for them. He saw their lost and desperate condition, and pitied it ; and in pity planned and provided a way of deliverance for them. " He saw that there was no man ; and wondered that there was no intercessor : He looked and there was none to help, and He wondered that there was none to uphold : therefore his own arm brought Salvation." And what was the Salvation which His love prompted Him to bring ? " He gave his only-begotten Son."

This is the *Second Truth* suggested in the Text.—The Scriptures, in speaking of the Love of God in our Redemption, never attempt to explain or describe its dimensions. They always represent it as a Love which " passeth knowledge:" a Love, the breadth, and depth, and length, and height of which are to us at present utterly incomprehensible.—" Behold ! (says St. John) *what manner of love* the Father has bestowed upon us !" *What manner!* but there he stops, nor pretends to delineate and define it. So in the text Christ Himself only says, " God so loved the world." But how greatly, how wonderfully, how intensely, in what measure, and to how great a degree he attempts not to explain.—It is not indeed *by words* that an adequate idea of Love can at any time be conveyed. Language must always prove a very insufficient mode of giving to any one a correct idea of the degree in which another loves him. It is by *actions*, that not only the sincerity, but also the measure of affection is shewn. If a person makes great sacrifices for us, puts himself to great inconveniences on our account, encounters troubles and dangers for our sake, we are led to believe that he loves us greatly. We estimate the extent of his love to us by the extent of his services for us. And in this way the Scriptures endeavor to give us some just conception of the Love of God in our redemption. They direct us to consider *what He has done* to save the world, that so we may the better apprehend the *degree* of love which He bears to it. His Love has been shewn in his *actions*. It has been evidenced to us, not by words only, but by deeds. Thus St. John tells us, " In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God

sent his only-begotten Son into the world."—And thus Christ says in the text, "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son."—This Gift of His Son, his only-begotten Son, was the manifestation and the measure of his Love to man. And how great, how vast, must that Love be, which led to *such* a manifestation of itself! How deep, how tender, how intense must be the Love of God to men, when for their sakes He withheld not his Son, his only Son, but freely gave Him up for them all! It will help us however in our meditations on this subject, to consider what is meant by God's *giving* his only-begotten Son; to enquire in what sense, in what way, to what end did He *give* Him? By comparing the language of the text with the passage I have quoted from St. John, we shall see that God's *giving* his only-begotten Son was the same thing with his *sending him into the world*. When the Son of God became incarnate, when the Word was made flesh; when He who lay in the bosom of the Father, and was in the form of God, laid aside his glory, and took on Him the form of a Man; when he thus became Emmanuel, God with us, God in our nature—then God *gave* his only-begotten Son. He gave him as a ransom, a sacrifice, a propitiation for the world. For in thus *giving* Him to become incarnate, He gave him up to all the consequences, which that incarnation entailed. Consider what these were. He *gave* Him up to all the infirmities, trials, and temptations, to which our fallen nature is exposed—*gave* him up to a life of trouble, affliction, and persecution: to be opposed and contradicted by sinners; to be reviled and insulted; to be beaten and spit upon—*gave* Him into the hands of his enemies; left Him, as it were for a season, in the power of Men and Devils, to endure all the sufferings which their utmost fury and malice could inflict upon Him—*gave* Him up to death, even the death of the Cross; that most painful and ignominious of all deaths—*gave* His soul an offering for sin, to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, to experience inward agony, darkness, dismay, and all those unspeakable horrors, which as the Surety and Substitute of Sinners, He was required to undergo.—This is what is meant by God's *giving* his Son. And when, for the sake of the world, this wicked and rebellious world of sinners, He *thus*

gave His Son, his only-begotten Son, his dearly beloved Son, surely we may form some faint conceptions at least, how exquisitely, how tenderly, he loved the world !

Let us now proceed to the *Third Truth* suggested in the text. This may be considered as the application of the preceding Two. "God loved the world, and gave His Son : " and why ? "That whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."—The end for which God thus gave His Son was that we through Him might be saved. In considering this Truth there are two things to be noticed.

1. The way in which Salvation is here described.

2. The persons to whom it is limited.

1. The way in which Salvation is here described is two-fold, negatively, and positively ; shewing what shall *not* happen to those that are saved, and what *shall* happen to them. In other words, we are here reminded of the misery from which Salvation will deliver us ; and of the blessedness to which it will exalt us : and in the review of these points we shall obtain still further discoveries of the Love of God to Man.

Salvation delivers us from the wrath to come. They who are saved "shall not perish." To perish is to die ; but not simply to die, not to die a natural death ; not to die once for all and to be reduced to nothing, to have no more sense or life, or feeling for ever. No : to perish or die, in the meaning of the text, signifies to *die eternally* ; to endure the bitter pains of eternal death ; in other words, to be "driven with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power ;" for ever to be deprived of his favor ; to be shut up under his wrath ; to be cast into hell-fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. This is the second Death ; that death which is the wages of Sin ; that death, to which all men have subjected themselves ; for all have sinned.—This is to perish : and *thus* to perish is the natural, the necessary consequence of rebellion against God.—But to deliver us from this death is one part of the Salvation provided for us. They who are saved, shall not thus perish. This was one part of that merciful design with which God gave his only-begotten Son, namely, to rescue and redeem us from eternal misery. The sufferings and death of Him who was God as well as Man,

were a sacrifice for sin, which God was pleased to accept in the stead of those sufferings and of that death, which sinners had deserved and were condemned themselves to undergo. Thus by his stripes we are healed: By his death we live.—How great was the Love of God to the world; in that He was disposed at such a price to redeem mankind from the pains of hell!

But this was only a part of His gracious purpose. He had a further object in view. He designed, in giving his only-begotten Son, not only to deliver men from wrath, but to restore them to favor: not only to redeem them from hell, but to exalt them to heaven. They who are saved; not only “shall not perish; but shall have everlasting life.” And who can comprehend what this expression means? When indeed we read that “God hath given to us eternal life,” and “that this life is in His Son,” we can understand, that in giving His only-begotten Son, God in virtue of his mediation, in consideration of his perfect obedience unto death, has restored to us a title to eternal life, and has opened to us again the door of the kingdom of heaven.—But who can understand, who can conceive, what that life implies, what that kingdom contains? To live for ever in peace, and happiness, and glory; to know God, to see Him, to serve Him, to dwell in His presence, to taste of His pleasures; to be for ever freed from every thing which is painful and evil, from trouble, sickness, and sin; to have all tears wiped away from our eyes; to put on a glorious immortality; to enter on an unfading inheritance; to be crowned with an eternal weight of glory—these are some few of the expressions used in Scripture to convey an idea of what Heaven is, of what those joys are, concerning which it is after all declared, that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard them, neither have they entered into the heart of man.”* Yet to bring us to this heaven, to put us into possession of those joys, was the other part of that rich, that merciful design, for which God gave His only-begotten Son. How great, how deep, how exquisite must be his Love to man, which led Him to plan, to provide, and to complete by such means such a Salvation for them! But we notice

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Secondly, The persons to whom this salvation is limited. Will *all* men partake of it? Will *all* be saved? Will *all* be delivered from wrath? Will *all* be received into heaven? The Scriptures answer No! to these enquiries. The text points out to us the persons to whom this salvation will belong, for whom it is intended, to whom it is limited, even *believers* in Jesus Christ. God hath given "His only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This indeed is that one qualification, which the Scriptures uniformly lay down as indispensable to salvation, Belief in the Son of God. "He that *believeth* on Him is not condemned: but he that *believeth* not, is condemned already." "He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth* not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved: he that *believeth* not (whether he may have been baptized or not) shall be damned."* But there is no occasion to multiply texts on a point so plain as this. The Salvation of the Gospel is designed and prepared for Believers in Christ; it is promised and limited to them. And who are meant by Believers in Christ? Those, who receive and welcome Him as their divine Lord and Saviour: who flee to Him for refuge; cast themselves upon His mercy; trust in his merits and promises; and submit to Him as their Prophet, Priest, and King: those, who, renouncing their own righteousness, seek only to be found in His: who feeling their own weakness, lean on the hope of His heavenly grace; who denying themselves, their own corrupt and evil inclinations, take up their cross and follow Him: those, in whose estimation He is precious; in whose affection He dwells; in whose heart He reigns; in whose lives He is manifested.—Such are Believers in Christ. Such are the persons, to whom the salvation of the Gospel is limited. To these only it is promised. These only are the persons, "who shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." And what then, my brethren, what, as a minister of the Gospel, as a preacher of Salvation, as your best and sincerest friend! what have I to do, but to invite, to urge, to intreat you thus to believe in the only-begotten Son of God? And on this subject what argu-

* John iii. 18. 36. Mark xvi. 16.

ments can I adduce more powerful, more persuasive than these, which the very discussion of the subject has suggested.

Hath God so loved you as to have given his only-begotten Son, that you might not perish, but may have everlasting life? And *will* you perish after all? Will you *not* have everlasting life? Will you reject these offers of mercy? Will you disregard this wonderful exhibition of Almighty love?

Consider what you are, and what you have been doing. Think of all your rebellion against God; of your many sins committed against Him; of the opposition and enmity which there are in your heart to his holy will and holy ways; and then reflect with yourselves, whether it is not very wonderful that God should have provided you with any Saviour at all, but especially with *such* a Saviour. Is it not a very convincing proof how deeply He pities you, how earnestly He wishes your happiness, that of his own accord He gave up his only Son to suffer and to die for your salvation; and will it not be as convincing a proof of your ingratitude and determined hostility against Him, if you persist in rejecting this salvation? Love ought to beget love: and the heart, which is not won by kindness and goodness, is hard indeed.

Consider also more particularly, what is the return which God requires of you for all this love. It is to believe in His only-begotten Son; to receive *Him* for your Master, who is the kindest of all masters; to submit to *Him* as your King, who is the best of all Kings; to follow *Him* for your Counsellor, who is the wisest of all Counsellors; to take *Him* for your Friend, who is the firmest of all Friends; to trust in *Him* as your Saviour, who is not merely a great, a sufficient, an Almighty, but the *only* Saviour. Is there any thing in all this requisition, which is hard, which is grievous; any thing to which you can reasonably object?

Consider further, *why* this return is demanded of you; *to what end* you are required thus to believe on the Son of God. Not for *his* benefit, but for yours; not to profit God, but yourselves. It is your own personal salvation which is at stake. It is your own individual misery or happiness which depends upon your compliance with this requisition: and remember, it is your happiness, or misery *for ever*. If you believe not, you perish; and you perish for ever.

The wrath of God will abide on you eternally ; and will abide on you the more heavily, because you have rejected his love. If you believe, you will have life even life for ever and over. You will be safe and secure in the hour of death. While your body sleeps in the earth, your spirit will be happy in paradise. At the last day, when the trumpet shall sound, you will have a joyful resurrection. Your body will be raised incorruptible. Your soul will be united to it in glory ; and both will live together in heaven for ever and ever.

My brethren, can I say any thing more to induce your compliance ? If these things will not convince, will not persuade you, the reason is plain ; you do not give credit to them. Your heart is shut up in unbelief. You do not really believe one word which I have been speaking to you : nay, (of what moment is it, that you believe not what I say) you do not really believe one word which *Jesus Christ Himself* has said in the text, has said to you in the Gospel. You hear his sayings, but do not receive them in faith and love. They sound in your ears, they float in your heads, but they do not sink into your hearts. There other things have possession, and not the word of Christ. There pride, or lust, or the world, or sin, in some shape or other, occupy the chief place, and shut out the things which belong to your real peace : for while any of these works of the flesh have rule within, Christ will not enter, and you cannot believe. Pray then for strength to resist and to overcome this strong man armed. Pray that a stronger than he may come upon him and cast him out. Pray that you may have the will and the power to receive Jesus Christ. If you have once decidedly the will, it will not be long before you have the power. He, who giveth the will, will give the power. He, who entered into the world to purify and to save it, will enter into your heart with all his purifying and saving efficacy, and will teach you to know in truth the blessedness of having the Son of God for your Saviour.

Are there not some who already know this blessedness ? Some who have tasted his grace ; who have felt his power ; who have experienced his love ? Such (as I remarked, at the beginning of this discourse) will rejoice to hear the glorious truths, which I have been attempting to unfold ;

these good tidings of great joy, which these gracious words so manifestly proclaim, that "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Tidings of great joy indeed! Blessed and glorious truths! May you, who feel them to be so, live in the full enjoyment of the privileges which they involve; in the faithful discharge of the duties and obligations which they impose! Live as becomes those, who are made partakers of such a benefit; who have experienced such a love; are redeemed at such a price; belong to such a Saviour; are saved from such a death; and are risen to such a life. Walk in faith and obedience. Depend only on the Spirit to work in you to will and to do. Be instant in prayer. Be patient in well-doing. Go through evil report, and good report. And may, the Lord comfort and stablish your hearts! May He confirm your peace: invigorate your hopes: cheer and refresh you by his presence; and cause all things to work together for your present and everlasting good, for his mercy's sake, through Jesus Christ!

SERMON XL

The call of the Gospel to Sinners.

EPHESIANS, v. 14.

Wherefore He saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee Light.

THESE words may be considered as the great Call of God to sinners in the Gospel of his Son. In many ways, and by different persons He has at different times delivered this Call; by the prophets in their preaching and writings; by John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ; by Christ Himself; by his Apostles after Him; by his ministers ever since; by the inspired writings of the New Testament; by the exemplary and holy lives of true Chris-

tians in every age ; by the secret and continual suggestions of the Holy Spirit. All these as it were with one voice, proclaim the call in the text. By all of them the Lord delivers the same message to mankind. "He saith, Awake, Thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." In endeavoring on the present occasion to enforce this Call, and, with the divine blessing, to bring it home to the hearts of all those whom it may concern, I shall shew,

I. The State in which the Gospel finds mankind.

II. The Duty which it calls on them to discharge.

III. The encouragement which it affords for discharging it.

I. The State in which the Gospel finds mankind is represented in the text as a state of *sleep* and of *death*. "Awake, Thou that *sleepest*, and arise from the *dead*." These expressions are doubtless figurative, and are intended to describe the *spiritual* condition of the person addressed, that is, the state of his soul with respect to God and Religion. Taking the words then in their most natural and obvious sense, without putting on them any forced and strained interpretation, they clearly imply, that the Gospel finds men in a state of great insensibility and unconcern with respect to the things of another world, and of extreme indisposition, and unwillingness to set about the work of true Religion. Such is the lowest sense which we can put upon these expressions ; and a sense, which the experience of every day confirms and justifies.

How men came into this most awful state, this state of spiritual Sleep and Death, is a point which might be easily shewn : for the Bible very clearly and fully explains it. But it is not a point, into which I have now any occasion to enter. My present object is to remind you that this is the state of men ; and if possible, to convince those who may now be in it, of its danger and misery. With this view let us consider with some attention the two particulars in which I have shewn it to consist.

1. It is a State of insensibility and unconcern with respect to the things of another world. What can be plainer than that such is the state of mankind in general ? Observe them : mix with them ; talk to them. Do we find among them a *prevailing anxiety* about their souls, and spiritual

things? Nay, do we in general discover *any* interest to be felt, or expressed on these matters? Are men in general *awake* on the subject of Religion? Does it engage their thoughts; does it give a turn to their conversation; does it influence their actions? A very slight acquaintance with mankind will enable us to answer these questions. See how men in general are living, setting their affections upon the world and the things of the world. See them running in different paths; some following one object, and some another; one intent on gaining money, another wholly given to pleasure, a third, laboring after fame, and honor: see them struggling, striving, contending with each other; but all agreeing in one thing, namely, to make the world their God, to push their own interests and to gratify their selfish inclinations. What in the mean time becomes of Religion, and of the love of their souls? These things either come not at all into their thoughts; or if they sometimes intrude, are speedily put off to a more convenient season. Or if conscience will not be so pacified, a cheap and an easy religion is taken up: a Religion which costs nothing and consists only in notions and forms, that differ as much from the solid principles and spiritual services of real Religion, as the wild fancies of a dreaming man differ from the sound, connected reasonings of one who is awake. Thus men *sleep*. Busied about trifles, they overlook the great concerns of eternity. Having their mind darkened, they see no world but the present: they live as if they were to live here for ever: and if at any time this false peace is shaken, they try all means to prevent it from being destroyed, and to lull themselves again to rest. This indeed will more fully appear from considering, in the next place,

How indisposed and unwilling men are to set about the work of true Religion. This is the second particular in their awful State as described in the text.—And surely the description is most just. If men were not thus indisposed to true religion, whence could it happen, that they should so generally resist the convictions of God's good Spirit on their hearts, and so constantly oppose every endeavor to bring them to a serious and an holy frame of mind? Yet this is notoriously the case. Men naturally dislike religious instruction. They love darkness rather than light; and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.

We all know what difficulty there often is in prevailing with a person to attend regularly the House of God, when yet there is no one thing which actually prevents his attendance but his own indisposition to it. Ask him whence this indisposition arises ; and if he conceal not the real cause, he will often say, that it arises from a dislike of hearing the truth. The minister is too plain with him ; shows him his sins too clearly ; makes Religion too strict and serious a thing. Hence he is offended, and from fear of having his peace disturbed, altogether avoids the hearing of the Gospel ; or if he reluctantly attends where it is preached, only *seems* to hear it, and shuts his ears and hardens his heart against it. The fact is, men naturally love their sins too well to be induced to part with them for the sake of Religion. Having in truth no spiritual knowledge of God, and consequently no real desire after Him, nor any idea of finding pleasure in His service, they look upon religion as a dull and a distasteful thing ; and suppose that, by heartily embracing it, they should relinquish much present enjoyment, and receive nothing in return to compensate for their loss. To such a form of Religion then as will allow them still to retain their sins and to cleave to the world, they will not always object : nay they can even find a sort of pleasure in complying with it ; for it gratifies their pride, and quiets their conscience : But from true, real, scriptural Religion, a Religion which claims the heart, which requires parity in the inward parts, and enforces universal holiness in every one who professes it ; they turn away with disgust ; and thus say to God in their hearts, “ depart from us.”—Surely, this is, indeed, to be dead in sin : for it is to be without any spiritual life and feeling ; which is the only true life of the soul. What a wretched State then is that described in the text ; the State, in which the Gospel finds mankind ; a State of *sleep* and *death*, of ignorance and unconcern about true Religion, of dislike and enmity to it ! I say, what a wretched state is this ! For be it remembered, my brethren, that nothing but Religion can save the soul from perishing. Nothing but this very Religion, of which men are so ignorant, about which they care so little, against which they have conceived such a dislike, can in the end deliver them from everlasting shame, misery, and punishment. Here then is their extreme misery and danger. They are unconcerned

about an object, which of all others ought to concern them most; and are set against the only remedy, which can be of any real service to them. They are every moment liable to fall into utter perdition: but they are not aware of their danger, and reject the only hand which is stretched out to save them. May the Lord open the eyes of all who are in this state, to see and flee from it! May He give to them ears to hear, and a heart to obey the important Call in the text! This is the second thing which I proposed to consider.

II. The Duty which the Gospel calls on them to discharge.

This Duty, as it is here expressed, is to *awake* out of sleep, and to *arise* from the dead. The admonition is given in terms answering to those in which the state is described. Let those who are asleep, *awake*. Let those who are dead, *arise*. The persons addressed are called upon to do in *their state* the same thing, as it would be for a sleeping man, in *his state*, to awake, or for a dead man to arise. Having seen then what their *State* is, we can the more easily point out their *Duty*.

Their Duty is to *consider* their state and their danger, to *break off* their sins by repentance, and to *seek* the knowledge and the favor of God. This is the call of the Gospel to every one, who may be in the state described:

1. *Consider thy state and thy danger.* What is the great cause why men are so indifferent to Religion, so careless about their soul, so devoted to the world, so wholly taken up with the things of time and sense, but that they will not *consider*. They will not set their mind seriously to think on the subject of Religion, and the awful concerns of Eternity. Instead of encouraging such thoughts, they wilfully put them away, and try to shut them out from the mind. They will not endure soberly to reflect on the shame, and misery, and contempt, in which a worldly, an ungodly, and a sensual life will certainly end. They drive away reflections of this nature. Here then is the first part of the duty to which they are called. "Awake thou that sleepest."—Consider thy ways, thy state and thy danger.—Let this thought dwell on thy mind, 'I have a soul as well as a body.' And let this question accompany the thought, 'What will become of my soul? Will it be happy or miserable?'—Call seriously to mind the shortness and uncer-

tainty of life ; and the vanity which is thus stamped on all earthly things. Think thus with thyself, ' I am alive to-day, but I may be dead to-morrow : and in what state shall I then be ? '—Remember that there is a God, a just and a holy God in Heaven ; and a Judgment, a solemn, and an awful Judgment, to come ; and then think whether thou art fit to appear before God, and to stand in judgment with Him. Say to thyself, ' What will it then profit me to have gained the whole world ? I am living an ungodly life, I dare not meet God. I see my danger, I have never considered these things as I ought to have considered them. Sin and the world have ruined my soul.'—To such serious consideration add

2. *Repentance. Break off thy sins by repentance.* No longer live in this careless, ungodly state. No longer follow the world, as if there were nothing deserving of thy thought and care, but the success of thy worldly schemes, or the pursuit of thy worldly pleasures. Walk no more with the multitude in the broad way to destruction, nor do evil because others do it. Separate thyself from wicked and worldly companions, and have no longer any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Desist from forbidden practices ; renounce unjust gains ; discontinue unlawful pleasures. Flee from temptation. Shun the places and the employments which may be likely to prove a snare to thy soul. Watch over thy heart. Examine its motives. Redeem the time.

3. *Seek the Knowledge and the Favor of God.* No longer remain ignorant of that God, to whom thou owest thy life, thy breath and all things ; on whom thou dependest for every thing which thou hast, and wantest ; who made thee, who preserves thee, who is about thy path and about thy bed, and spieth out all thy ways. No longer continue indifferent to His favor ; regardless whether He be thy friend or thy enemy, despising His mercy and provoking His wrath. But seek after Him, and acquaint thyself with Him. Seek to know Him. Seek His favor. Use the means which He has appointed to be used for the attainment of these things. Waste not the Lord's Day in idleness or pleasure, or worldly matters. But employ it in holy exercises, and to holy purposes, in frequenting His house, in reading His word, in praying to Him for His blessing

on thee. Call upon the Lord for mercy ; confess thy sins to Him ; implore His forgiveness through the Gospel of His Son. Beseech Him to accept and pardon thee for Christ's sake ; to teach thee by His good Spirit, to pity thy weakness, to help thy infirmities, to take thee into His family, and to make thee an heir of everlasting salvation.—*Thus*, awake from thy sleep ; *thus*, arise from the dead. This is the duty to which thou art called in the text. Observe,

III. The Encouragement, which it affords for discharging it.—“ And Christ will give thee Light.”

Light is a word often used in Scripture to denote spiritual blessings ; and when thus used, it generally signifies either Knowledge, Peace, or Holiness. It may be here taken in all three senses. All these blessings Jesus Christ is ready to bestow on every one who obeys the Call in the text : yea, He engages and promises that He will bestow them.

“ Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.” Consider thy State, and thy Danger ; break off thy sins by repentance : seek the knowledge and the favor of God, and Christ will give thee

1. *Knowledge*. He will enlighten thy darkened mind. He will teach thee by his good Spirit, and will effectually lead thee into all saving truth. Thou shalt no longer be ignorant of God and of his ways. Thy understanding shall be opened to understand the Scriptures ; thy heart shall be disposed to receive and relish divine truth.—Are there not some among us who can testify to these things ? Some, who have been awakened and quickened ; and who, comparing their past with their present state, can each for himself confidently say, “ One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” Once ‘ I was sadly ignorant of God, and of my duty. I knew nothing of my own heart, nothing of the way of salvation. I was in darkness, and in the shadow of death. But Christ has given me light. He has taken away the veil from my eyes. He has brought me by a way that I knew not. He has led me into paths I did not know. I asked, and it has been given me. I sought, and I have found. I knocked, and it has been opened to me.’

2. Christ also will give thee *Peace*. This is another blessing, which on obeying the Call in the text, thou shalt

receive. At present thou art a stranger to peace. It is utterly impossible that thou canst know what real peace is : for Sin and the World cannot give peace. The utmost peace which they can give is that fearlessness, which arises from ignorance of danger : such as a sleeping man might experience, while a drawn sword were suspended by a single hair over his head. But far different is the peace which Christ will give. It is a real, solid, positive peace ; a peace which springs not from ignorance, but from knowledge ; not from seeing no danger, but from seeing a way of safety, a door of escape from all danger. *Now*, whatever peace thou mayest have, arises from not knowing and not feeling that thou art a sinner, and daily exposed to the wrath of God : but the peace which Christ offers thee, is a peace which will arise from a consciousness, that thy sins are forgiven, and that although thou art a sinner, thou art yet reconciled to God. This is *true Peace*. And *How* will Christ give thee this Peace ? By shewing thee that He Himself is become thy Peace ; that having taken thy sins upon Himself, and suffered for them on the Cross, He has made thy peace with God : by teaching and enabling thee to trust in His blood and righteousness, and promises, and so to apply to thyself the all-sufficient benefits of his obedience unto death. My brethren, do not some of us know what *this* peace is ? Do not we feel the difference between that false, presumptuous security which we once had, and the firm substantial comfort, which we now enjoy in Christ Jesus ? I trust we do. I trust we can truly say, ‘ I was dead, but am alive. I was in darkness, but Christ has given me light. I knew not the way of peace, but He has shed abroad in my heart that peace, which passeth all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away.’

3. Christ will give thee *Holiness*. Remember, that without Holiness thou canst never see the Lord. Holiness is our meetness for heaven. It is that state and disposition of heart which alone can fit us for seeing and serving God. At present thou knowest nothing of this state of heart. It is impossible while thou sleepest, and art dead in Sin, that thou canst know any thing of it. But obey the Call in the text ; Awake, arise, and Christ will give thee light. He will make thee holy. He will change and sanctify thy

heart. He will cause thee to love Him, and to find pleasure in his ways. Obedience to God shall be thy delight ; and the sin, of which thou art now so fond, shall become thy aversion, thy burden, and thy grief.—May I not again hope, that some of us can testify to the reality of this change also ? Have we not found this blessed effect, in some degree at least, wrought upon our hearts ? All who have really come to Christ in the Gospel, must have found it thus : for whosoever He gives *Knowledge*, and *Peace*, He assuredly gives *Holiness* also. These things are never separated. And where Christ gives these, He will as assuredly give more, He will give also *Eternal Life* : for all these Blessings are the steps to Heaven, and the earnest of it.

Upon the whole, what Encouragement is there to obey the Call in the Text. Since Christ is ready, and has promised to give such great and glorious blessings to those who obey His call, why should any of you continue in a state of sleep and death ? May His grace accompany the Call to your hearts ! May His Spirit rouse and quicken you ! So shall you awake indeed, and be roused to newness of life. So shall you die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Be warned. Be admonished. Sleep not till you awake in another world, and find too late that a Death in sin here will surely end in Death Eternal.

SERMON XII.

Christ's Invitation to the Heavy-laden.

MATTHEW, xi. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you Rest.

ONE reason why men esteem Religion so little is, that they so little understand it. They know not its worth and excellence. They are not aware of the consolation and delight which it would yield, if they would but heart-

ily embrace it. They look upon it as a dull, and an unprofitable thing. They think, that it would make them gloomy, would spoil their enjoyments, and destroy their peace. But how great is their mistake ! Did they see the matter aright, they would know that to be truly religious is in fact another expression for being truly happy. Would they but make trial of the ways of God, they would find in them that real enjoyment, that practical satisfaction, which they are vainly seeking in other ways. There is no passage more likely to fix this truth upon our minds, than the one which I have read to you. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden ; and I will give you rest."—May God vouchsafe his blessing to us, while I endeavor to explain and apply these gracious words !

I shall with this view lead you to consider

I. The person speaking, and the person spoken to.

II. The words addressed to them.

I. The person speaking.—This is a point of the greatest moment : a point, on which the whole depends. When any one makes an offer, gives a promise, or enjoins a command, the first thing which we are concerned to know is this, By what *authority* doeth he these things ? Is he one whom we may credit ? Is he able to make good his offers ? Is he willing to fulfil his promises ? Has he a right to enjoin these things ? Till we are satisfied on these points, we cannot be fully persuaded to believe and to do all that he says ; we cannot perfectly repose in him our confidence, nor implicitly follow his commands. Who then is the person speaking in the text ? What is his authority ? What are *his* claims to our faith and obedience ? He is One, whom we have the strongest reasons to believe and obey : for the Father, by a voice from heaven, has said of him, "This is my beloved Son, Hear ye *Him*." He is One, whose Word we cannot distrust ; for He is the Truth itself, the Faithful Witness, who cannot lie nor be deceived. He is One, whose Power we cannot question ; for He has all power in heaven and in earth, according to what He himself declares in the verse before the text, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." He is One, whose Willingness to fulfil his offers we cannot doubt : for He came into the world to save Sinners. He, who was willing to lay down his life for our souls, cannot but be willing to do for us all that He has

promised. On every ground, therefore, He has the strongest claim to our attention, and our confidence. We may rely on what He says with full assurance. He has not said more than He is authorised to say, or than he is able and willing to fulfil. He tells us nothing but what is most certainly true. He directs us to nothing but what is absolutely for our good. He promises nothing but what He will surely perform. How greatly ought we to value the words of such a Friend! How diligently should we listen to them! How readily obey them! May we be more thankful for them than we have been! May we regard them more attentively, love them better, and try to fix them deeper in our hearts!

Such is the Person who is here speaking.

We consider in the next place the Persons to whom he speaks. And who are these? Who are the Persons, to whom the compassionate Friend of Sinners *should* speak, but the miserable and the distressed; but those, who claim his pity and stand in need of his advice? Such were the persons whom He came from heaven to save; and to *such* He speaks in the text, "All ye that labor and are heavy-laden." Here are two words employed to describe their state; both of which convey the same description of it. They agree in representing it to be hard, and painful, and afflicting. The Persons spoken of are described as *laboring*, toiling hard, spending their strength, and wasting their spirits. They are also said to be *heavy-laden*, groaning under a burden, which they can with difficulty bear, encumbered with a load, which they can scarcely drag along. Such are the Persons, to whom the Saviour speaks. He speaks to *all* who answer this description; to sufferers of every kind; to all, whatever the cause, whatever the nature of their toil may be, "who labor and are heavy-laden." May they attend to the point which is now to be considered, namely

II. The Words addressed to them.

It was foretold of Christ, that one part of His work would be, to "comfort all that mourn." We here find him tenderly fulfilling this gracious office. He not only looks on the unhappy sufferer, and has compassion on him; but like the Good Samaritan binds up his wounds, "pouring in oil and wine." While He pities all who "labor and are heavy-laden," He shews them where to go for comfort and

relief. "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." These Words contain a Direction and a Promise.

"Come unto Me." This is the *Direction*. When Christ directs the objects of his pity, where to go for help. He does not send them to others ; He invites them to Himself. "Come unto Me." Let us see what is meant by this expression. When Christ first gave the invitation, He was on earth ; and persons might have literally complied with it. They might have come into his presence. But now they cannot come to Him in this way. He is now in heaven, and no man can literally come to Him, into his presence. Nor if they could, would they comply with the meaning of the invitation. By coming to Him is meant, not merely the coming into his presence, even when it could have been literally done, but the coming to Him with right views, dispositions, and desires. Those who would have come to Jesus when on earth, in the real meaning and spirit of the invitation, would have come to Him with a disposition to receive and follow his instructions, with a heart prepared to submit to his authority, and to comply with his commands. In other words, they would have come to Him *in faith*, hoping for a blessing at his hands, and desirous and disposed to seek it in any way in which He might direct them to seek it. Thus they would *then* have come to Him, had they come, as He intended they should. And *thus* then we may still come to Him. We may still come to Him *in faith*, with these dispositions and desires : for though he be not now on earth, personally present with us ; yet He is still present with us by his Spirit. He reveals Himself to us in his word : there we may seek and come to Him. He meets his people in his Ordinances : there we may find and come to Him. By faith and prayer we may still approach Him. In relying on his promises, in obeying his commands, we may still comply with his invitation. Renouncing all other lords and masters, and choosing Him for our Saviour and our King, we still may come to Him.

Let us advert next to the Promise which is added : "I will give you rest." *Rest* is the blessing promised. And what blessing is so suitable as rest to those who labor and are heavy-laden ? It is the very blessing, of which they stand most in need, and which, when once attained, they will most sensibly value and enjoy. This blessing then Christ

will give to them. He will *freely* confer it on them. It is a blessing to which they have antecedently no claim ; and of which they are wholly undeserving. They can do nothing to merit it. They have no right to expect it. But as a free and a gracious gift, it is offered unto them, and shall be bestowed upon them. The Faithfulness and Power of Christ are pledged to bestow this gift. He hath said, " I will give you rest." The direction and the promise are closely and inseparably joined together. If the persons addressed will but follow the direction, they shall experience the promise. If they will but comply with the invitation, they shall taste the blessing. Let them with their heart believe on Jesus as their Saviour, and submit to Him as their King ; and his word shall be fulfilled unto them. They shall no longer labor and be heavy laden. They " shall find rest unto their souls."—Such is the meaning of the promise.

Having thus led you to consider the Person here speaking, and the Persons spoken to, together with the gracious Words addressed to them, I now purpose to make a more close application of the subject.

It may more particularly be asked, *whom* did our Lord mean by those who labor and are heavy laden ? He meant us all. There are none whom the description would not suit. Every man, in some way or other, labors and is heavy laden. He is groaning under a burden, from which none but Christ can set him free. He may not, indeed, be sensible of his state. But this insensibility only increases his real misery. For till he feel his burden, he will never seriously come to Christ for rest. When, therefore the minister of the Gospel looks round on any congregation, and considers how many persons there may possibly be present who thus labor, and are heavy laden, who *might* find rest unto their souls ; but who, from ignorance of their state, and from an insensibility of their burden, are kept from coming to Jesus Christ ; he cannot but be touched with a tender compassion for their condition ; he cannot but be stirred up with an anxious desire of being profitable to them, and if possible of leading them where only they can find true peace and lasting happiness. Happiness, my brethren, is the object of your search. You are all wishing to be happy. You are seeking it in a variety of ways. But so long as you are not seeking it in Je-

sus Christ, you "are walking in a vain shadow, and are disquieting yourselves in vain." You are following an object, which you can never overtake. You are seeking for happiness, where it never can be found. Prove whether this be not the case. Examine the matter. Bring it to the test. What have been the plans in which you have looked for happiness? Say, have they answered your expectations? Have you found happiness in them? Do you find in them a rest for your soul?

Speak *you* first, who are following worldly pleasures; who place and seek your enjoyment in sensual gratifications, in frivolous amusements, in folly, vanity, and vice; say, do you find in these things real, inward, substantial peace? Is your soul fully at ease in the midst of these delights? We know that it is not. If you will own the truth, you will confess, that notwithstanding your seeming mirth, your apparent enjoyments, you are not really happy. You find a vacancy in your soul, which these pleasures cannot fill. You are secretly dissatisfied with yourself. Your own conscience at times condemns you. You shun serious reflection. You dare not to look into your own heart, and closely to compare it with the word of God. You often run into company and riot in order to get rid of your thoughts, and to fly from yourself.—Surely this is not happiness. This is not rest. It is to labor and to be heavy laden, however little you may own or feel it. The service of sin is a hard service. It destroys present peace and precludes future happiness; while it has this evil especially belonging to it, that the wretched captive sees not his misery and even loves his chain.—How different would be your state, if you would comply with the direction in the text! If you would come to Christ, and take his yoke, you would find the happiness which you are in vain seeking in sinful and worldly pleasures. True religion, heartily embraced, and diligently followed, would yield a satisfaction, and a delight, to which you now are strangers.—May He, who calls you to Him, incline your hearts to come. So shall you find rest unto your souls!

Let *those* speak next, who are seeking their happiness in the pursuit, or in the possession of worldly wealth. You, my brethren, are aiming to be rich; at least to do well, to prosper in the world. You are striving to advance your-

selves and families. You are laboring to lay up much goods for many years. But are you really happy, while thus engaged? Do you find in these things full satisfaction and solid peace? No. You find that they are unsatisfying. The fancied good, which you are following, is frequently not obtained; and when attained it seldom, it *never* answers the expectation which you had formed of it. One trouble or another comes with it, which takes away nearly all the comfort which you had hoped to draw from it. You find vanity written on every worldly enjoyment. Yet still you cease not from the pursuit, your thoughts and talents, your days and nights, are anxiously employed in following the shadow, which continually escapes your hold, and disappoints your grasp.—Surely this is to labor in vain, and to be heavy-laden to no purpose.—Come *ye* also unto Christ, and make trial of His ways and promises. Come as you have seen, you are required to come to Him, in faith and obedience, and you shall find the truth of His word, you shall taste a happiness, which while it fully satisfies, will never cloy. Freed from your present anxieties, and subject no more to such continual disappointments, you shall find a solid, and a lasting peace in your soul. Christ will give you rest. In a sense of his love and favor, in his promises of grace and pardon, in fellowship with the Father and with the Son, in the consolations of the Holy Spirit, in the hope of eternal glory, you shall find a source of peace and joy; such as the world cannot give, and such as it can never take away. Call to mind the power, the faithfulness, and the mercy of Him, who has said, “take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”—May His Spirit convince you of the heavy yoke, which you now endure: that so you may prefer his light and easy burden!

But there is one description of persons, to whom the text applies with very peculiar force, and who, in an especial manner are concerned to listen to the gracious invitation here vouchsafed. They are *those* who labor under a sense of guilt; who being heavy-laden with the burden of unpardoned sin, are afraid of the wrath to come. My brethren, the time was, when you felt nothing of these things. You were whole in your own esteem. If you *said* that you were a sinner, you did not *feel* that you were one. But it is not so now. Your eyes have been opened. Your conscience

has been awakened. You are sensible that God has a long account against you. You have broken his holy laws. You have slighted the Gospel of His grace. You have contracted a heavy debt, and have nothing to pay. Thus your "sins are gone over your head as a sore burden; they are a heavy burden, too heavy for you to bear." You know not how to get rid of it. You try, but try in vain, to satisfy the demands of conscience. You endeavor, it may be, by self-imposed duties and severities to make amends for past offences. You resolve to sin no more. You shun bad company and evil practices. But notwithstanding all these attempts, the burden still remains. Your sense of guilt increases. The load of unpardoned sin hangs heavier on you. You daily become more conscious of your own inability to remove it. You are indeed heavy-laden, and groan being burdened. But what says Christ in the text to you, and such as you? "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Here is your remedy. In Christ is a cure for every disorder; a balm for every wound. He will take away your burden. By coming to Him you shall be set free. That pardon, which you so greatly need, is laid up for you in Him, and in Him alone. He shed his own precious blood to purchase it. He will freely bestow it on all who come to Him for it. They shall have "Redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Come then to Him, my brethren, Look to Him alone for the removal of your guilt. "He bore your sins in his own body on the Cross." "Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him; and you shall find rest unto your souls." "Being justified by faith, you shall have peace with God, through Jesus Christ." Doubt not his willingness to receive and help you; for He hath Himself called you, and promised to receive you. "Come unto me *all* ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Distrust not His truth and faithfulness: for "He is faithful who has promised." Come to this merciful and compassionate Saviour, who calls you to Himself; who by His word, by His ministers, and by His Spirit, invites you to come to Him for rest, and peace and happiness. Come to Him without fear, without delay. Come to Him in all the ways, in which He hath appointed you to come. Especially come to Him in *Faith*. Believing you shall receive. According to your faith, it shall be done un-

to you. Wait on Him in prayer believing ; and in the end you shall find those gracious words addressed to you, " Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee : thy sins are forgiven."

And here, my brethren, I might conclude my discourse, were it not possible that there may yet be some present, who not exactly included in any of the classes hitherto described, are yet equally capable of deriving instruction and consolation from the text. I allude to the distressed and tempted Christians : to those, who having fled to Christ for refuge, and having found their guilt removed, and their peace restored, are now laboring under a new and an unexpected burden, the burden of an evil heart, and of a daily conflict with the remaining power of sin.—Probably you might think, that on once coming to Jesus Christ, and having your conscience once purged from guilt, through Him, you would have experienced no more sorrow, no more darkness ; that every weight would have been taken away for ever ; that all would be sunshine, peace and joy. And perhaps for a time you found it thus. But at length clouds have arisen ; the light has been obscured, and to a degree you are again walking in darkness ; a darkness, not in itself so thick and horrible as that which formerly enveloped you ; but, a darkness the more gloomy and distressing, because it is contrasted with the glorious light, which you so lately have enjoyed, and which you had hoped to enjoy for ever without diminution or interruption. And whence has this change proceeded ? From an increasing experience of the corruption and depravity of your heart. Freed from the burden of a guilty conscience, you are now groaning under the weight of a depraved nature. You thought that sin, when pardoned, would have given you no more trouble : that freed from condemnation, you would have been freed from corruption also. But to your surprize and grief, you now find that you were mistaken. Sin, which for a time seemed to be dead, has revived ; and though dethroned, still threatens and strives to resume its empire. Old propensities and former habits, which appeared to be subdued, again plead for their wonted gratifications ; and notwithstanding past conflicts and past triumphs, you still find " a law in your members, warring against the law of your mind, and bringing you into captivity to the law of sin, which is in your members." Dismayed and confounded at

discovering so much evil, when you had fondly hoped that all evil had been almost extirpated, you are perhaps greatly cast down. You are tempted at times to distrust the faithfulness and power of Jesus Christ, or to question your own sincerity, and your consequent interest in his promises. You are ready to say, "If I am indeed a child of God, Why am I thus?" Or you adopt the language of St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" My brethren, let the words of the Apostle which immediately follow this complaint, shew you what to do. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."* It is through Jesus that you must look for deliverance from this body of death. Those, who labor, as you are laboring, under a feeling sense of remaining sin, are equally included in the invitation in the text. "Come unto me and I will give you rest." This increasing experience of the corruption of your hearts and of the strength and power of sin in your soul is designed for your spiritual good. It is one of the means which the Holy Spirit employs for more effectually mortifying your pride; for weaning you from self and from the world; for exciting your prayers, and for making Christ more precious in your eyes. Its object and tendency is to lead you to have less confidence in the flesh, and to rejoice more simply and truly in Jesus Christ "Come to Him, and He will give you rest." Pray to Him for His help and support in this arduous conflict. Cast your burden upon Him, and plead your cause before Him. Pray to Him, that for *His name's* sake He would subdue your iniquities, and that *because* you are his servant and soldier, He would give you the victory. He will now hear your prayers. In due time, He will answer them. He will allay the conflict of contending passions. He will say to the winds, and to the waves, Be still; and there will be a great calm. He will disperse the clouds. He will lighten your darkness. He will give you rest and peace, and you shall go on your way rejoicing.

* Romans, vii. 24, 25.

SERMON XIII.

The Sin and Guilt of not Obeying the Gospel.

1 PETER, iv. 17.

What shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?

ST. PETER here proposes a very important question, which without referring to its immediate connection with the context, we shall do well to lay deeply and seriously to heart. All men living, to whom the Gospel comes, either do obey it, or do not obey it. With respect to the former, those who obey the Gospel, we know what will become of *them*: we know what *their* end will be. It will be happy, it will be glorious. All their afflictions will work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But what shall the end be of those, that obey not the Gospel of God? What will become of *them*? The Apostle, having put the question, leaves his readers to answer it. It is in fact a question which is addressed to our own reason and conscience, and which furnishes its own reply. It is, as if the Apostle had said unto us, Weigh well the wickedness of these persons. Consider what they are doing and what they deserve. Compare these things with what is written in Scripture; and then judge how great will be the punishment, which at length will assuredly overtake them. To assist you then in coming to a right judgment on this important subject, I shall endeavor to set before you two things:

I. The Sin here specified.

II. Its great and aggravated Guilt.

I. The Sin here specified is not obeying the Gospel of God. The Gospel of God is that gracious message which God hath sent to us by his Son Jesus Christ. To obey the Gospel is to receive this message as coming from God: to comply with the terms, and to follow the directions contained in it. On the other hand *not to obey* the Gospel, is to do the very reverse of this. It is to treat the message with

indifference and neglect ; to reject the terms, and refuse compliance with the directions which it sets before us. This then is the Sin here specified. But to give you clearer notions of this Sin, I will describe to you some different sorts of persons, who are guilty of it.

Among these, in the first place, are to be ranked all who are living in an irreligious, ungodly manner, careless of their souls, and of eternity, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and walking after the course of this present evil world. It requires not much reasoning to prove, that such persons are guilty of the Sin in the text. The Gospel of God calls on them to repent and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. It directs them to turn from their sins, to deny their lusts, and to overcome the world. While therefore they continue to act in direct opposition to these injunctions, while their hearts remain hard and sensual, while they serve sin, and follow the multitude to do evil, it is plain beyond a doubt, that they are not obeying the Gospel of God. Let me then admonish all whose consciences tell them that they are persons of this description, seriously to reflect on the matter. You have an intolerable load of sin upon your souls, of numberless transgressions daily committed throughout your life against the holy law of God : but in addition to every other sin, you are chargeable with *this Sin* also. You do not obey the Gospel of God. How great and aggravated is the guilt of this sin, I shall shew hereafter. But in the meantime I would strive to fix it in your minds, that this guilt, whatever it may be proved to be, is *yours*. You are at present one of the persons spoken of in the text : and so long as you continue one of these, *their* end, whatever it may be, will undoubtedly be *yours*.

A second description of persons, who are chargeable with the Sin in the text, are those, who, while they call themselves Christians, yet do not make Jesus Christ and Him crucified the *only* ground of their reconciliation with God, and of their title to eternal life. They do not take Him as their righteousness ; through whose death and obedience *alone* they look for the pardon of sin and peace with God. They have still some confidence in the flesh. They are still trusting to *something* in themselves, in their own works or doings, for their acceptance with God. If Christ be the foundation, he is not the *one only* foundation of all their hopes.

Or if they seek to be justified by Him, it is not by *faith only* that they seek it. But acting thus, they do not obey the Gospel of God. They do not comply with the terms, nor follow the directions of it. The very first and chief thing which the Gospel enjoins, is Faith in Christ. It offers us pardon on no other terms but on believing in Him, and receiving Him as the Lord our Righteousness. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth shall be saved." "The Righteousness of God" (by which alone the sinner can be justified) "is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." "We are saved by grace through faith." "Christ is of God made unto us Righteousness;" and so we are "made the Righteousness of God in him." "Believing in Christ we are justified from all things." This is God's way of saving sinners. He "justifies them freely by his grace through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom he has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood for the remission of sins."—How came it to pass that the Jews, who followed after righteousness, did not attain to it? For this very reason; they did not seek it in God's way. They "sought it not by faith, but by the works of the Law."—What was the reason for which St. Paul so severely rebuked the Galatians, telling them that they were fallen from grace, and had been removed into another Gospel, or rather into no Gospel at all? It was this: they had left off seeking to be justified by Faith in Christ, and were seeking justification by the works of the Law. Hence it was that he broke forth into that earnest exclamation, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not *obey* the truth?"* Justification by Faith only in the merits of Christ is so essential a part of the Faith, as it is in Jesus, that to seek Justification in any other way is not to obey the truth; and consequently to be guilty of the Sin in the text. Would that this point were deeply considered by all who call themselves Christians. It is to be feared that numbers who claim this title, are greatly deceiving themselves. See, my brethren, that it be not your case. See, that while you pretend to receive the Gospel, you are not virtually rejecting it: that while you profess the hope of being saved

* Gal. iii. 1.

by Christ, you are not in fact seeking to be justified by the works of the Law. Remember that if you thus seek it, "Christ is become of no effect unto you." You only "frustrate," (you only make void) "the grace of God."* Whatever you may think, in reality you do not obey the Gospel; and must have your end with the unbelieving and the disobedient.

There is a third sort of persons yet to be noticed, who are equally guilty of not obeying the Gospel of God. They are such as make a shew of Religion, and yet do not bring forth the fruits of it. They profess to believe in Jesus Christ; but yet are not careful to maintain good works. They hope to be saved by Him; but they have no desire to be made like Him. They think to share the privileges of Religion, while they neglect its duties. They trust that Christ will deliver them from the wrath to come; but here they have no mind to be his real Disciples. They deny not themselves for his sake. They take not up their Cross and follow Him. They confess Him not before men. They keep not the heart with all diligence, nor labor to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit. Now nothing can be plainer than that such persons do not obey the Gospel of God. For the Gospel of God requires them to do all those things, which they leave undone. It bids them to follow after holiness; to bring forth good fruit; to crucify the flesh; to walk in newness of life; to grow in grace; to have the mind which was in Jesus Christ; to let their light shine before men. Consider these things, all ye who profess to know God; but in works deny Him: who calling yourselves Christians, yet seek not after inward purity; who are satisfied at the most with lopping off some of the branches, and lay not the axe to the root of the tree; who, notwithstanding your pretended hope in Christ, remain proud, or covetous, or sensual, or worldly, or passionate, or envious, or uncharitable, who still love mammon more than Christ, or pleasure more than God; who readily seize every opportunity of gratifying your favorite sin; or if you deny one lust, only do it, that you may more easily indulge another.—Consider all ye, who answer to any part of this description, that you are equally guilty with the others be-

* Gal. ii. 21.—v. 4.

fore-mentioned of the sin specified in the text. You obey not the Gospel of God. This is your Sin. I proceed

II. To set before you its great and aggravated Guilt. This is a point but little regarded and understood. Even those, who may have some tolerable correct views of other sins, have yet frequently very unequal conceptions of this. They think but lightly of the Sin of rejecting the Gospel. In disobeying the Gospel they do not seem to think that they are doing any thing, which will increase their guilt. But let us hear what Christ himself has said on this point. "He that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."* The not obeying the Gospel, or which is the same thing, the want of Faith in Jesus Christ, is expressly assigned as the cause and the ground of condemnation. In fact, this sin which men esteem so light, or, which they think no sin at all, is the worst and the greatest sin of which any man can be guilty. It is that sin, which in guilt exceeds all other sins; and will sink those who are guilty of it into the deepest condemnation. Does this assertion surprise you? I will endeavor to convince you of its truth.

Men are apt to measure the evil of sin by the immediate consequences which flow from it. They deem *that* sin to be the greatest, which does the most injury to themselves or others. But this is not the standard by which the degree of guilt is to be regulated. For the evil of sin does not lie in the injury which is done to man, but in the injury which is done to God. The circumstance which makes sin so evil, is, that it is committed against God. It is a breach of His law; an offence against His government; an affront offered to his Majesty. Would we know then the evil of any particular sin, and the degree of guilt which attaches to it, we must consider it in reference to God. In this light let us consider the sin of which we are speaking, and we shall then see how great and aggravated is its guilt.

In the first place, the Gospel is the *Gospel of God*. It is that gracious message, which the Almighty Himself hath sent to us, to us his creatures, the work of his hands, the daily dependants on His bounty for life, and breath, and all

* John, iii. 18.

things. What then can be more affronting to God than not to obey the Gospel? God has sent us a message, and shall we refuse to listen to it? Hath God spoken, and shall we turn a deaf ear to what He says?

Consider further *by Whom* He hath sent this message to us. It was not a common messenger that He has employed. It was not a man like ourselves. It was not an angel even of the highest order. No. It was one, who was high above all angels. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by his Son;" that Son, "whom He hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also He made the worlds;" and who, we profess to believe, will come to be our Judge. Surely the dignity of the Messenger greatly increases our obligation to listen to his message, and our guilt in rejecting it. Hath not God a right to expect that we should reverence his Son? Hath He not a right to expect that we should attend to Him, who came from heaven to speak to us; and whom He hath commanded us by a voice from heaven to hear? "This is my beloved Son: hear ye Him." What greater insult can we offer to God, than to shut our ears against such a messenger?

Consider again, what is the *purport of this Message*. It is a message of mercy; of mercy the most gracious to sinners, to enemies, to rebels. The Gospel is the Gospel of Peace. It brings to us glad tidings of great joy. It makes known to us that way of salvation, which God in his infinite wisdom and goodness has provided for our fallen and guilty race. It teaches us how we may be reconciled to Him, and recovered out of that state of guilt and misery into which sin has plunged us. To refuse then to listen to this message, not to obey this Gospel, is to pour contempt on the rich mercy of God. It is to shew that we despise his offers, value not his favor, and desire not to be at peace with him. How then can we more pointedly declare the enmity of our hearts to God, than by such a conduct? How can we more grossly offend, insult, and sin against Him?

Consider once again what is *that wonderful mystery of Love*, which the Gospel discloses to us. When God had planned a salvation for us, as it was not any common messenger which He sent to tell us of it, so neither was it any

common way in which He prepared it for us. That same Son, who came to make known to us his Father's will, came also Himself to perform that will. He came to suffer and to die in our stead, and for our sins. He came to be a sacrifice for us, to shed his own blood for us on the cross, that by his stripes we might be healed, that by his sufferings our peace with God might be made. This was the price of our redemption, the precious blood of Him, who was God as well as man. What love must He have had for sinners to redeem them at such a price? How great must have been his compassion for our lost and miserable state, that while we were yet enemies, He should be content to die for us! And how aggravated then, how immensely great must the guilt of rejecting such a Saviour; of returning enmity for so much love; of refusing to submit to Him, who laid down his life for us! Not to obey the Gospel is, in fact, to crucify the Son of God afresh, to put him to death a second time. And what wickedness can be greater than this! Who can conceive the ingratitude and the guilt of such a conduct!

Having thus set before you the two points which I proposed, let me now remind you of the Apostle's question in the text. "What shall *the End* be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" What will become of those persons of whom we have been speaking? What do you yourselves think will be their End? Having seen the great and aggravated guilt with which they are chargeable, are you not in your own conscience convinced, that their End will be dreadful; so dreadful, that it would have been good for them never to have been born? In truth, though St. Peter does not himself answer the question in the text; yet St. Paul furnishes us with the most plain and explicit reply to it. He expressly says, in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians,* that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," (take notice of the words, "that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ) who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."—How indeed

* 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9.

can it be otherwise? If God be, as He certainly is, the Just Avenger of Sin, what vengeance must He not have in store for the greatest of all sins, for the punishment of his most incorrigible enemies; of those, whom neither threatenings would subdue, nor mercy soften; of those who would not obey his Gospel; who slighted his message, despised his love, and crucified his Son? From the vengeance reserved for such sinners, may the Lord deliver us! May we never know it by experience. But may He so dispose and prepare our heart, that we may now take timely warning, and may flee from the wrath to come!

My brethren, what is the great aim of all which has been said to you, or can ever be said to you on this subject, but that you may be stirred up to a deeper and more lively concern for your immortal souls? Why is the Gospel preached to you, but that you may obey it, and be saved? Why was the blood of Jesus shed, but that you, by receiving Him, may escape eternal condemnation? May the Holy Spirit of God incline you to lay those things seriously to heart, and to attend with earnestness to the One Thing needful! May He take of the things of Christ and show them unto you! May He stir you up to seek his salvation, and to obey his Gospel!—Then will your End be glorious. Then, when the unbelieving and the disobedient shall be overwhelmed with everlasting shame and misery, you shall shine forth as the stars in the firmament, and shall be blessed for ever and ever.

Yes; such will be the glorious, the triumphant End of all those, who now obey the Gospel of God, who having fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, and daily depending on his grace and promise for pardon, wisdom, and strength, “are now living the life which they live in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God,” and are bringing forth fruit to his praise and glory. There is a salvation prepared for *them*: even the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. “There is an inheritance reserved for *them*, even an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” When the world, with all its fleeting riches, pleasures, and honors, shall have passed away for ever, *they* will be put in possession of a treasure, a joy, a glory, which will be substantial, and everlasting. My brethren, set before you this glorious End. Contemplate that crown of right-

comments which, though invisible to human sight, and disregarded by the carnal mind, is revealed to the eye of faith, and realized to the believing soul. Contemplate it with seriousness, with attention, with steadfastness. See the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive your departing spirit. Hear these gracious words proceeding out of his lips, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Set these things, I say, before you. Realize them by faith: and derive from the contemplation of them, all the encouragement and all the consolation, all the motives to patience, to exertion, and to renewed obedience, which they are so fully calculated to inspire. Is the way of Religion a narrow way; is it thorny, difficult, painful? Bear in mind the End to which it leads. Are you called to suffer for righteousness' sake; to endure reproach, opposition, or hard usage, from the world, because you belong to Christ? Have respect unto the recompense of reward. Are you harassed with trials and temptations, afflicted with sickness or poverty; neglected, forsaken, oppressed? Set before you that Rest, which remaineth for the people of God. Let none of these things move you, so that you may finish your course with joy. Be patient; be diligent: "not slothful; but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." In due time you shall reap if you faint not. Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life. Above all things, my brethren, pray for wisdom and strength from heaven. Ever remember how ignorant and weak you are in yourselves. Without help from above you will neither know what you ought to do, nor will you have courage and ability to perform it. Pray then for grace continually. Be earnest and instant in supplication. Seek to walk more closely and humbly with Jesus Christ. Be more simply dependant on His Spirit. Be more entirely directed by His word. Be more decidedly devoted to His service. So shall you more truly obey the Gospel of God. So shall your end more assuredly be glorious. "So shall an entrance be ministered unto you more abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

SERMON XIV.

Saving Faith through the Word.

JOHN, xvii. 20.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word.

THESE words are taken from that memorable Prayer which our Lord offered up on the evening before his Crucifixion, and which can never be contemplated without feelings of the liveliest interest, and of the most devout admiration. These feelings are especially heightened by the consideration that this Prayer is probably designed as a pattern of that Intercession, which He is still carrying on at the right hand of God, as well as a statement of those blessings for which He is continually praying in behalf of those, who are the objects of his mediation. On an attentive reading of the Prayer, we shall find these Blessings chiefly to consist in a present deliverance and preservation from the evil that is in the World; in progressive Sanctification; in Communion and Fellowship with the Father; in Love and Union with one another, and in final and complete Glorification with himself in Heaven. And who were the objects of this Intercession? Who were the persons, for whom the Redeemer of the world thus prayed? Was it for the Apostles, for those, whom the Father had given Him out of the World; who had received his word, and believed that the Father had sent Him; was it for those that He supplicated these Blessings? Yes: for those: but not for those only: not for those exclusively: but for all such as should ever hereafter become his true Disciples. This is the point which is directly asserted in the text. We might have apprehended that these favored individuals were the only persons for whom this Prayer was offered. But for ever to preclude such an apprehension, our Lord expressly says "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." As if he had

more fully expressed Himself. Though 'these my twelve Disciples, whom, the Son of Perdition excepted, I am about to send as my Apostles into the world, may in some respects have a peculiar interest in this Prayer; yet I design not that the general Blessings invoked in it, should be limited to them. I pray that they may be extended to all those, who in every station and condition of life, in every age or country of the world, may be brought to believe on Me through their word.'—And what again are we to understand by this Word? Are we to restrict it to the Word which they *preached*? Thus to restrict it, would be to limit the Benefits of Christ's Intercession to the generation in which the Apostles lived. It is evident that the Word which they *wrote*, was equally intended by our Lord: for it was only through this Word that the blessings of his mediation could be extended to future and distant generations. Nor indeed is the expression, by parity of reason, to be limited even to the Word written by the *Apostles*, it must be understood equally to comprehend the writings of the *other inspired Penmen*, both of the Old and of the New Testament: all of whom "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and were inspired and guided by the same Spirit: all of whom testified, more or less distinctly, of the same truths; and spake, though in different terms adapted to the different dispensations under which they lived, of the same Salvation. In short the Word mentioned in the text includes, directly or indirectly, the whole Word of God. We may understand it to signify generally the Scriptures: all of which were "given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in Righteousness."

Such appears to be the meaning of the passage: and from the passage thus explained I purpose to deduce two propositions.

I. That the benefits of Christ's Mediation are limited to those who believe on Him.

II. That the Scriptures are the Medium through which this Belief is produced.

These two Propositions I shall endeavor to confirm and illustrate: and may that Blessed Spirit, who alone can lead us into all truth, graciously assist us in a discussion,

from which conclusions so important and interesting will evidently result !

I. That the benefits of Christ's Mediation are limited to those who believe on Him is plain, as we have seen, from this single and striking consideration ; that in the very passage of this intercessory Prayer, in which He designates expressly to set forth the wide and comprehensive exercise of his Mediation, He yet, in most positive terms, confines it within this limitation : that at the very moment, in which he would obviate the supposition of its being partial and exclusive in its operation, he yet most decidedly restricts that operation to those *who shall believe on Him*. Nor was this the first, or the only occasion, in which He stated and maintained the same Truth. In fact it was but a repetition and confirmation of the Doctrine which he had uniformly taught. He had always represented belief in Himself as an indispensable qualification in those who would be saved by Him. To Nicodemus He had said, " God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." " He, that *believeth* on Him is not condemned ; but he that *believeth* not, is condemned already, because he hath not *believed* in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." To Martha He had said, " I am the Resurrection and the Life : he that *believeth* on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and he that liveth, and *believeth* on me, shall never die." To the Jews He had said, " This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which *seeth* the Son and *believeth* on Him, shall have everlasting life ; and I will raise him up at the last day." And after His resurrection from the dead, He still held the same language ; and in the commission which He gave to his Apostles, strongly asserted this fundamental principle of His religion : " Go ye, into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ; He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved."—What in fact is the universal language of Scripture on this subject, but a repetition of the same truths. Let us hearken to the testimony of John the Baptist, " who came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through Him might believe." " He that *believeth* on the Son, hath everlasting life, and he that *believeth* not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on Him." Let us listen to

the declaration of St. Paul, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:*" and to that of St. John, "*This is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ.*"—And the same language, which is thus used in respect to salvation in general, is equally used in respect to the particular and separate branches of it. Every individual blessing of the Gospel, every single fruit of Christ's Intercession is uniformly represented as a consequence inseparably united with the act of believing on Him. Is it pardon of sin? "*To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth on Him, shall receive remission of sins.*" Is it Justification? "*By Him, all that believe are justified from all things.*" And again, "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*" Is it Adoption? "*As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*" Is it Sanctification? Those that are sanctified are said to be "*sanctified in Christ Jesus.*" Their hearts are "*purified by faith:*" they are "*sanctified by faith, that is in Christ Jesus.*" Is it spiritual support and strength? "*He that believeth on Him, shall not be confounded.*" Is it spiritual light and knowledge? "*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*" Is it spiritual peace and joy? "*Now the God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing.*" But there is no occasion to multiply texts on a subject, on which they might be multiplied without end. Those already produced are sufficient for our present purpose. With one voice they confirm the proposition under review. With one voice they bear witness to the inseparable union between Faith and Salvation, between a belief in Christ and an interest in His mediation. With one voice they proclaim that the benefits of His intercession are limited to those who believe on Him. I proceed then

II. To the other proposition deduced from the text; namely, that the Scriptures are the Medium, through which this belief is produced.

The same consideration which shewed the first proposition to be true, proves the truth of this second also: for if our Lord Jesus Christ, in stating the extent of his interces-

sion, has restricted the benefits of it to those who should believe on Him, and who should believe *through the word* of his Apostles, it is plain, from the explanation already given of the text, that the Scriptures are the Medium, through which a saving belief in Him is produced. By this restriction, He has in fact assigned to them this office. And is not this the office, which St. Paul assigns to them, when he says, that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And does not St. John ascribe to them the same office, when he says, that "these things were written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."*—But *how* do they perform this office? *How* do the Scriptures produce faith? They produce it in two ways.

1st. Inasmuch as they are the *foundation* on which it is built.

"Faith," according to the Apostle, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."† In other words, that belief, of which we are speaking as necessary to salvation, is such a firm persuasion in the mind of the reality and excellence of things, which have not been submitted to the outward senses, as convinces the judgment, and engages and influences the heart. But from this description it is evident, that such a belief supposes a certain degree of previous information and knowledge; for without some information respecting the things in question, how can there be any persuasion of their reality and excellence? To believe then in Jesus Christ, and in the efficacy of his Mediation, implies that we have a certain degree of previous knowledge on these subjects. And where is this knowledge to be obtained; where is the previous information respecting Christ and His salvation to be procured, but from the Scriptures? The Scriptures are the only source of divine information and knowledge. Here only are we taught the way of salvation. Here only are we instructed in the knowledge of those things, "which pertain to life and godliness." Here only is Jesus Christ set forth evidently crucified before our eyes. Here only is He exhibited to us as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; as the High-Priest of our profession, who is passed into the

* Romans, x. 17. John, xx. 31. † Hebrews, xi. 1.

Heavens, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Here only are life and immortality brought to light. Here only are disclosed to us those exceeding great and precious promises, by which we may be made partakers of the divine nature. No wit or wisdom of man could ever have penetrated into these mysteries, or have discovered to us the knowledge of them. They are matters of pure revelation, and are made known to us only by the word of God. Neither have they been handed down through the uncertainty of human tradition. They have been preserved and are secured to us in the written oracles of truth, in the Holy Scriptures; which, being the only depository of divine knowledge, can be the only foundation of saving Faith. In this respect they produce Faith. They produce it.

2dly. Inasmuch as they are the instrument by which it is wrought in the heart.

That Faith, of which we are speaking, and to which alone the Blessings of Christ's Mediation are restricted, is itself the gift and operation of God. It is the work and production of the Holy Spirit in the heart. It is one of the most valuable fruits, one of the most important effects, of that new and holy nature, which in regeneration He imparts to the soul. But the great instrument by which He works and operates, is the written Word. This is the instrument, which, when commissioned and employed by the Spirit of God, becomes "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow:" and which is, therefore, emphatically stiled "the Sword of the Spirit." This is the instrument, by which He accomplishes the great work of our regeneration itself, for it is expressly said by St. Peter, that we are "*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever:*" and again by St. James, "*of his own will begat He us by the word of truth.*" Hence, by the same instrument, He produces Faith in the heart. Blessed with His quickening energy, the Word "*comes with power,*" and "*effectually worketh in them that believe.*" To what other cause can we ascribe it, that the three thousand on the day of Pentecost believed and embraced the Gospel, but to the powerful and quickening energy with which the Holy Spirit accompanied the preaching of the Apostle, and thus through

the medium and instrumentality of the Word produced a divine faith in the hearts of those who heard it? Does not St. Paul call the Gospel which he preached, "the word of Faith," as being that word by which Faith is produced and strengthened in the heart? Does not Christ say to the Jews, "ye have not His word abiding in you; for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not:" thereby intimating, that if the Word of God had abode in them, it would have produced Faith. Their not believing, was a proof that the Word did not abide in them. It could not abide in them, and they at the same time remain destitute of Faith.

Having thus endeavored to confirm and illustrate the two propositions deduced from the text, I shall proceed to make a practical application of the truths contained in them.

1. Has Christ limited the benefits of His mediation to those who *believe* on Him? Is this really the case? Does He confine His intercession even in its most extended application to *believers* in Him? How strikingly does this truth shew the importance of Faith! How clearly does it point out the wide distinction between believers and unbelievers! Ministers are often censured for insisting on this distinction. They are blamed for stating the importance and necessity of saving Faith. But has not Christ Himself stated this importance, this necessity? Has not He insisted on this distinction? While He prays exclusively for those who believe on Him, does He not virtually shut out from the benefits of His intercession, those who believe not? Surely this is to point out a wide and most important difference between belief and unbelief. When we declare that a man must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved; do we declare more than Jesus Christ Himself has declared? Do we declare more than His Apostles have declared; more than the Scriptures throughout declare? No. We declare no more than all these declare; and less we dare not to declare. We preach to you Faith—Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—as that one great, essential principle, the absence, or the presence, the want or the possession of which constitutes the grand distinguishing difference in the state and characters of men. Those who have this Faith, are the children of God, and have an interest in all the blessings of the Gospel, in all those great and glorious privileges, which the intercession of Christ procures. While those, who are

without this Faith, are at enmity with God, belong not to His family, are under the curse of His law, and have neither part nor lot in the Gospel. We preach to you this Faith as the bond of union with Christ; the foundation of all good works; the only source of all practical godliness. We preach to you this Faith, as a living seed in the soul, not a dead, a cold, a barren notion in the head, but a vital, a warm, a powerful principle in the heart, impelling to active, spiritual obedience, and naturally, yea necessarily productive of the fruits of righteousness and true holiness. This is the Faith we preach; a saving, justifying, sanctifying Faith: a Faith, which adorns, enriches, and ennobles all who have it; but without which the proudest distinctions of rank and wealth, the highest attainments in learning and science, the most orthodox notions of religion, the most correct form of it, the most zealous profession of it, will leave men at last only poor, wretched, and contemptible beyond all possible conception.

2. Are the Scriptures the *Medium* through which this Faith is produced? Do those who believe on Jesus Christ, believe *through the Word*? Is this proposition also true? Is it true in two respects? Is the Word the *Foundation* on which Faith is built, as well as the *Instrument* by which it is wrought? In both these respects then, how important is the Word of God! How invaluable are the Scriptures! And what a powerful and practical influence should this consideration of their importance and value have on the use which we make of them, and on the purposes to which we apply them!

Is the Word of God the *Foundation* on which faith is built? Is it from the Scriptures only that we can derive the knowledge of those great truths, the belief of which is essential to our salvation? Then how thankful should we be to God for this inestimable gift of His Word! How desirous should we be of possessing this sacred treasure! When possessed of it, how diligent should we be in the perusal of it! How incessantly should we draw water from these wells of salvation! With what care and anxiety should we labor to become acquainted with the contents of the Bible! With what attention should we read it in our houses! With what readiness should we embrace the opportunity afforded us of hearing it publicly preached or expounded! The injunctions

given to the Israelites on this subject are, in the spirit of them, equally binding upon us under the Christian dispensation. "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." In this passage, indeed, the study of the Scriptures is enjoined as a duty : but let us remember that it is a duty enjoined on us for our own good ; a duty, the performance of which is closely connected with our own interest, yea, absolutely necessary to our real and everlasting happiness.—Search then the Scriptures, for they testify of Christ ; and they, and they only, " are able to save your soul."

Nor do the practical consequences which result from the truth before us, end here. They terminate, not with ourselves ; they reach to others also. The consideration that the Bible is the foundation of all saving Christian Faith, should excite in us an ardent desire, not only of possessing and studying this Blessed Book, but of communicating it to others also ; and thus of furnishing them with the means of obtaining like precious faith with ourselves. The dispersion of the Scriptures, so far as we have it in our power to disperse them, is a duty highly incumbent on us as Christians : it is a debt of gratitude which we owe to our Redeemer : it is a debt of love which we owe to our fellow-creatures. Nor can that person be duly awakened to a sense of his proper obligations, who does not feel an ardent desire of imparting not only to his friends and relations, not only to his neighbors and acquaintance, not only to his fellow-churchmen, or fellow-countrymen, but to every individual of the human race, whether Jew, Turk, Infidel, or heretic, a copy of that heavenly volume, which alone is " able to make him wise unto salvation." How ready then should we be to take a part in promoting this good and glorious work ! How thankful should we be for every opportunity vouchsafed to us of promoting it ! With what cordiality should we give our mite, our wishes, and our prayers in support of that noble Society, which has lately sprung

up among us, the glory and ornament of our native land; that Society, whose only object is to disseminate throughout the earth, the Word of Life; and through whose exertions it may be reasonably hoped, that in due time the saving Truths of the Gospel will go forth into all lands, and their words into the end of the world.

But lastly, are the Scriptures not only the foundation on which Faith is built, but also the instrument by which it is wrought? How powerfully should this consideration operate on our minds and conduct. Let us remember, my brethren, when we read or hear the word of God, when we study it at home, or listen to it abroad, that though we thus attain to a *knowledge* of the truths to be believed, yet the *actual believing* of them must be the effect of a divine operation on our hearts. We may hear, and read, and know, and understand, and yet at the same time not really believe. Nor shall we ever *thus* believe unless the Spirit of God accompanies the word, and disposes and enables the heart to receive it in faith and love. Let us further remember, that the Word of God is the appointed instrument by which the Spirit accomplishes this gracious work; by which He reaches the heart and produces in it true and living Faith. According to the terms and promises of the covenant of grace, the ministration of the Spirit is annexed to that of the Word, that so our Faith "may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Let us, I say, remember these things, and bear them in mind, and act accordingly. Let us study the Bible with the *view*, with the *hope*, not only of obtaining divine knowledge, but also of procuring *Divine Faith*: of getting it first implanted, and then strengthened in our soul. In our use of the Scriptures let us humbly hope for a divine impression on our heart. Let us earnestly pray that the Spirit of God will give life and energy to the Word, and will cause it effectually to work in us, that we may truly believe to the saving of our soul. If such were the hopes and prayers with which the Bible was generally opened, and the House of God attended, great would be the increase of true Religion to be witnessed, abundant the spiritual harvest to be reaped. May the Lord hasten it in his time! May *we*, my brethren, so read and hear his holy Word, that it may be mixed with faith in our hearts! May we so believe in Jesus Christ, whom God hath

sént, that at His second coming we may be found among that blessed company, for whom on earth He prayed, "Father I will that they whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!"

SERMON XV.

Difference Between Christ's Peace and the World's Peace.

JOHN, xiv. 27.

Peace I leave with you ; my Peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

THE Peace of which Christ here speaks, is inward peace, peace of conscience ; a mind at peace with God and with itself : that "peace of God," as the Scriptures call it, "which passeth all understanding." This is the blessing which Christ bestows on his Church. It is the legacy, which He has left to his people. "Peace I leave with you." It is also, in a peculiar sense, *His* peace, as being His purchase and His work ; bought for us by his blood, and wrought in us by his Spirit. "My Peace I give unto you." But there is nothing by which the distinctive excellence of this peace is more strongly marked, than by its great unlikeness to that peace, which the world bestows upon its followers. For the world, like religion, has a peace of its own, a peace peculiar to itself : a peace however, which, in fact does not deserve the name, and essentially differs from the peace of the Gospel. This difference our Lord might probably intend to notice in the text, when He says, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The peace which I give, is not the peace which the world gives. It is very unlike to it ; it is very different from it, and in many respects the very reverse of it.

It is this Difference between the peace of Christ, and the peace of the world, which I purpose to make the subject of the present discourse. God grant, that the considera-

tion of it may be profitable to us, by stirring up our hearts to seek true peace, where only it can be really found, even in Jesus Christ !

There are three points wherein the Difference, of which we are speaking, may be clearly and distinctly traced.

1. The two kinds of Peace which we are comparing with each other, are totally different in their *foundation* and *origin*. The one is founded on ignorance : the other on knowledge. If worldly men are at peace, it is because their eyes are blinded ; because they see not and know not, and are in darkness. But true Christians derive *their* peace from a very contrary source. They have peace because their eyes are open ; because they see and know, and are in the light. I will explain this matter further.

Men who are walking according to the course of this world, in the lust of the flesh, in the lust of the eye, or in the pride of life, may be free from all distressing fears about the condition of their soul. They may not feel any uneasiness at the thoughts of a judgment to come. Their consciences may give them no alarm. They may even think themselves safe, and entertain no doubt of their final salvation.—And this state of fancied security is that which we mean by the peace of the world. But now, whence does this state of mind arise ? How comes it to pass, that persons who are living in ungodliness and sin, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and consequently daily exposed to everlasting condemnation, should possess this security, and enjoy this peace ? The reason is plain. They are ignorant of their danger. The God of this world has blinded their eyes that they cannot see. Their souls are all darkness within. They have no knowledge of God : that is, no right and true apprehensions of Him, as a just and holy Being, who is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity, and will by no means clear the guilty. They know nothing of their own guilt. They see not the number, the greatness, the malignity of their sins. They are ignorant of that holy law of God, which reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and requires truth in the inward parts—Hence springs *their* peace. This is the *foundation*, on which it stands, the source from which it originates.

See on the other hand what is the foundation on which Christians build their peace. They know all those things

of which worldly men are ignorant. The eyes of their mind have been opened. They have seen the true character of God, the spiritual nature of the divine law, and their own exceeding sinfulness and guilt. At first, perhaps, the sight of these things might occasion some uneasiness, and might create in them many fears. But this uneasiness is now removed. These fears are all allayed. Peace is established in their soul. And how did they attain to it? By looking unto Jesus Christ. The same mercy, which has led them to see their sins, has led them also to see their Saviour dying for those sins, and by his death taking them away for ever. And this sight has quieted their fears. They have seen Jesus, who delivers from the wrath to come, "of God made unto them righteousness," set forth as a propitiation for their sins; and thus looking unto Him, they have found rest unto their soul. "Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." —Such is the *foundation of their peace*.

And from this view then of the subject, we may see how widely the peace of Christ differs from the peace of the world. The peace of the world is the peace of a sleeping, of a stupified, of a hardened conscience. They who have this peace, cannot give any reason *why* they have it. They cannot *account* for the security which they feel. They cannot say *whence* it comes, or *on what ground* they have any pretensions to it. But the peace of Christ is the peace of an enlightened, of an awakened, of a tender conscience. The Christian not only has peace, but can tell *why* he has it. He "can give a reason of the hope that is in him." He knows "whom He has believed." He can say with a conscious experience of the truth of his words, 'Christ is my Peace. I look to Jesus Christ and to Him crucified. I believe on Him, and am filled with Peace in believing.'

My brethren, are there not some of you, who can bear witness to these things? Who have yourselves felt both these kinds of peace; and knowing, by your own experience what they are, can testify to the truth of this representation? The time has been when you were in a state of stupid unconcern about your soul and eternal things. You felt nothing, you thought nothing to any good purpose, on the subject of religion. Troubled and cumbered about many things; you were wholly regardless of the one thing needful. At the

same time your conscience gave you no uneasiness ; and you felt yourself in a state of peace. But it has pleased God in his great mercy, to awaken you from this awful sleep. Your eyes have been opened. You have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light. The Lord by His Word, and by His Spirit quickened you when dead in trespasses and sins. Your mind became enlightened. Your conscience became alarmed. Your false peace was destroyed. And through the same divine mercy, a new peace has been revealed to you. You have found this peace in Jesus Christ. Fleeing from the wrath to come, you have sought refuge in the promises of the Gospel, and have found rest unto your soul. In Christ you have found a real, an abiding peace : a peace which passeth knowledge ; a peace of which you once had no conception ; but a peace, which you now know by heartfelt experience, and which you would not be tempted to exchange for every thing which this world could offer you in return. Is not this the case ? Is not the Peace which you now have in Christ Jesus, as different from that Peace which you once had in the world, as light is from darkness, as health is from sickness ?—Prize then this inestimable gift, this precious legacy. Remember *whose* gift, *whose* legacy it is ; the *price* at which it was purchased, the *friend* by whom it was bequeathed ; and render the praise and the thanks and the glory to Him, to whom they are so justly due.

II. The two kinds of Peace, which we are comparing together, are totally different in their *present effects*. The peace which the world gives, being founded in ignorance, and consisting with a state of sin, leaves a man still enslaved to his lusts and appetites, nor puts him on any endeavor to free himself from this miserable bondage. Checked by no fear, he follows without restraint the devices and desires of his own heart. Disturbed by no doubts or apprehensions, he pursues whatever course his natural inclination leads him to prefer. Whether his favorite and besetting sin be pride, or ambition, or covetousness, or sensuality ; be it what it may, he indulges it with greediness, while at the same time he is crying Peace, Peace, to himself. But how widely different in this respect is the Peace which Christ gives to his people. This is a Peace, which, being the fruit of faith and the work of grace, is accompanied with

a sanctifying influence, that frees and purifies the heart from sin. The man who experiences this blessed Peace, cannot but seek to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin. In fact, this is a Peace which cannot subsist with a state of sin. It cannot subsist with the practice of any known transgression of the law of God ; with the allowed indulgence of any irregular desire : for such a practice, such an allowed indulgence would at once interrupt and destroy it. Let us remember that this Peace is a Peace founded on knowledge, on reflection, on a solid, scriptural hope of our being at peace with God through Jesus Christ. But how can this hope be formed or maintained, unless at the same time there be also a consciousness, that nothing is practised or allowed which is forbidden by God, or displeasing to him ? Without such a consciousness, the hope itself cannot stand ; and consequently the Peace, which must be founded on it, cannot exist. St. John declares, that “ every one who has this *hope* in him *purifies* himself even as Christ is pure.” And the same may be said of the Peace of the Gospel. Every one who has this Peace, purifies himself. It is a Peace which produces the most glorious fruits, purity, holiness, and righteousness.

And here (again) may I not appeal to the experience of some who hear me ? You, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious ; who have been brought to feel something of that real Peace of which we are speaking ; say, what do you know on this subject ? Cannot you testify, that such are the blessed effects of being at peace with God through Jesus Christ ? Formerly you could promise yourselves peace in the ways of sin. You could break God’s laws with little remorse, or at the most with some transitory uneasiness. You could live in the habitual indulgence of vicious appetites, of evil tempers, of worldly affections, and not feel either shame or fear. You could presumptuously “ bless yourself in your heart, and say, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, and add drunkenness to thirst.”—But is it so now ? My brethren, if I know any thing of your hearts and feelings, it is not. Now that you have been taught to know the truth as it is in Jesus, you have learned to fear sin ; to avoid it ; to renounce it ; to flee from it. You cannot now do as you once did. You cannot allow yourselves in the practice of what you

perceive to be sinful. I know indeed that you are far from being perfect, neither have you already attained. I know that so long as you are in the flesh, and carry about with you a body of sin, sinful desires, and evil passions, are not, and will not be altogether rooted out of your heart. You find and feel them there. But you now lament that they are there. You do not wilfully indulge them. You resist and deny them; and earnestly pray and strive to have them utterly subdued and mortified. You know by experience that to give place to them is the sure way to wound your conscience, and to interrupt your comfort. You find by daily trial that "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace:" that the more closely and more humbly you can walk with God; the stronger is your confidence towards Him, and the greater your happiness in Him. Go on then in this blessed path. Fight the good fight of faith. See that Self be more denied, and sin more subdued. Follow after righteousness; and you will find that promise fulfilled to you. "The work of righteousness shall be Peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

III. The two kinds of Peace, which we are comparing together, differ also in another very important respect, namely, in their *End*. Here the difference between the Peace which Christ gives, and the Peace which the world gives, is indeed most striking. The Peace which the world gives, is at best only for a season. The time is coming when it must perish for ever. Founded as it is on ignorance, and consisting as it does with a state of sin, it cannot reach beyond this life. In another world it must come utterly to an end for evermore. Suppose that a man is now living in ease and tranquillity. Suppose him to be under no care or anxiety about his soul. He either thinks not at all of its concerns; or presumptuously flatters himself that it is safe. Intent only on present gratifications, he follows his own devices, and goes on in the way of his own heart, and promises to himself, that to-morrow shall be as this day, or much more abundant. Suppose, I say, that a man is in this state; yet how long will it last? It can last no longer than life lasts. Then the fatal deception, the miserable delusion must end. Then the veil will be torn from his eyes. Then he will no longer continue ignorant of those things which he

has hitherto refused to know. The dreadful evil of sin, the awful punishment prepared for it, the wrath of an offended God—those weighty, those momentous truths, which he here regarded as fables or fancies, will then appear to him most substantial, most dreadful realities. He will then see himself to be a guilty sinner, compelled to stand before the judgment-seat of God, and stripped of every excuse. And what is become of the Peace which he once had? It is fled, it is lost for ever. He will never know peace again. He will have no rest day nor night. He will go into everlasting punishment, where his worm will “never die, and the fire will never be quenched.”

Would it might be, my brethren, that all of you, who, are now lulled asleep by this world’s Peace, would lay these things seriously to heart! You are now, it may be, at ease. You feel no guilt. You fear no danger. You think, if you think at all, that you are in safety, and will do well at the last. But awake, I beseech you, from this ruinous slumber. You are *not* in safety. You will *not* do well at the last. Look forward to the time, when this dream will end: when your eyes will be opened, and you will awake to shame and everlasting contempt. God himself has declared that “there is no peace to the wicked:” and while you are living careless about your souls, *you* are wicked. The Peace then, which you seem to have, is no peace, no real peace. It is only that awful calm, which precedes and portends the heavier storm. Awake, I entreat you from this state. Awake now; lest you should only awake, when it shall be too late, on the bed of death, or in another world; when you shall knock, but knock in vain, for entrance; when you shall begin to lament with fruitless cries and tears your folly and your hardness of heart; when you shall be left without one ray of hope to cheer your gloomy prospect; without one drop of water to cool your burning tongue. Such is the *End* of this World’s Peace.

But far different is the end of that Peace which Christ bestows. He gives not as the World. This Peace, the Peace with which He gladdens the hearts of his people, is a Peace, which will last for ever. There will be no end thereof. Instead of failing and forsaking a man at that time when he wants it most, it will then be most strong, most present, most abiding. It will comfort him in sickness.

It will cheer him in death. It will follow him into eternity. There it will be turned into joy unspeakable, into bliss most glorious. That hope, which has here been its chief support, will there be fully realized. No disappointment will be felt. Every promise will be abundantly fulfilled. Every expectation will be more than answered. Whatever may have here disturbed or interrupted the enjoyment of this peace, will there cease entirely and for ever. Sin will trouble no more. The world will trouble no more. All tears shall be wiped from the eyes. All anxiety will be removed from the heart; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever.—This is the *End* of christian Peace, of that Peace, which the World cannot give, and which even now it cannot take away; of that Peace, which Christ has purchased by his blood, and has bequeathed as a legacy to his Church.—Ye who now possess this Peace; Ye, who know what it is to be at peace with God through Jesus Christ, rejoice and be exceeding glad. Having found this Peace, you have found indeed a pearl of great price. Strive then to maintain it. Labor to acquire a richer enjoyment, a livelier experience of it. Walk more closely, and more humbly with your God and Saviour. Devote yourselves more entirely to his service and glory. So shall your peace increase like a river. You shall have all joy and peace in believing. You shall live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

SERMON XVI.

Conversion from Sin the great Blessing of the Gospel.

ACTS, iii. 26.

Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

JESUS CHRIST is a spiritual Saviour. According to the original promise given to Abraham, He came "to bless all the kindreds of the earth." And the Blessing which He brought was this, Deliverance from Sin. The Jews indeed rejected this Blessing. To them first He was sent. But they were carnal; and had no mind to His holy doctrines, and spiritual redemption. They looked for a worldly Saviour, a deliverer from the Roman power. When Jesus therefore disclaimed any pretensions of this kind, they were filled with disappointment and rage: and disregarding all the prophecies, by which His divine mission was proved, they crucified the Son of God, as a Deceiver, and an Impostor.

Nor let their conduct surprize us. If Jesus were again on earth, it is more than probable that He would meet with a like treatment. Men in general have no more inclination now to be delivered from their Sins, and to look upon such a deliverance as a blessing, than the Jews had then. Worldly blessings they still prize and covet: and so long as Jesus would heal their bodily diseases, and supply their temporal wants, they would flock around Him with eagerness, and would follow Him with admiration. But so soon as He should talk to them of their spiritual diseases, and wants; so soon as He should offer "to bless them by turning every one of them from their iniquities"—by curing their evil tempers, subduing their sinful dispositions, and eradicating their vicious propensities—they would turn a deaf ear to his discourses, would leave Him in disgust, and perhaps load Him with reproaches. But why should we speak of probabili-

ties? What do facts prove? Jesus, as a spiritual Saviour is still present with us. He is still ready "to bless us by turning every one of us from our iniquities." Yet how few avail themselves of the privilege vouchsafed! How few value, and desire the Blessing! How few seek after, and apply for spiritual Salvation!—Blessed indeed be God, there are some exceptions to this too general Truth: some, who through grace are made willing to be turned from their iniquities; who feel the burden of Sin, and anxiously long for deliverance from it. In the humble hope of assisting such persons, and, if it please the Lord, of adding to their number, I purpose in discoursing on the Text, more fully to shew

I. The Blessing announced.

II. The Means by which it is conveyed.

III. The Persons to whom it is offered.

I. God hath sent his Son "to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities." The blessing announced is conversion from sin. And what does conversion from sin mean? It means some thing more than an outward reformation. When a man amends his life, leaves off some bad habits, and puts on a decent appearance, the world which "looketh only at the outward appearance," pronounces him to be an altered man, a reformed character. But far different may be the judgment of God respecting his *real* state; for "the Lord looketh at the *heart*." Unless the change without be preceded, and attended with a corresponding change within, all pretensions to conversion from sin are hypocrisy before God. While pride, or passion; while sensuality and covetousness; while any corrupt or ungodly principle *rules* in the soul; whatever alteration may have taken place in the outward conduct, no alteration has really taken place in the heart. The man is not "turned away from his iniquities." He is only turned from one iniquity to another, to another less offensive, it may be in the sight of his fellow-creatures, but not perhaps less hateful in the sight of his heart-searching Creator. Some few branches are lopped off, but the nature of the tree continues unimproved. Some few streams are stopt, but the fountain still retains its poisonous quality, and merely flows in other channels. True conversion from sin is a conversion of the whole man; a deliverance, not only from the practice of sin in the life, but from the love, and power

of it in the heart. It is a restoration to the Divine Image ; a transformation by the renewing of the mind. It implies that sin is dethroned, and the kingdom of Christ established in the soul ; that the flesh is crucified with its affections and lusts ; and a new principle of holiness implanted within.

Such is the blessing here announced. And is it not a blessing ? Would God have sent his Son to "turn every one of us from his iniquities," if conversion from sin were not a blessing ? Would the Son of God have "given Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity," if redemption from sin were not a blessing ?

Is *Health* a blessing to the sick ? Sin is the disease of the soul. The man who is under the dominion of sin, "has no health in him." "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." Sin effects his whole constitution, disorders his understanding, vitiates his affections, induces a fatal stupor on the mind, benumbs and deadens every faculty, blinds the eyes to the glorious things of God, and closes the ear against his gracious truths. Sin is the leprosy of the soul, which renders it unclean, disqualifies it for admission into heaven, and defies the power of human remedies. Is it not a blessing to be recovered from such a state ?

Is *Freedom* a blessing to the slave ? No slave is so wretched as the slave of sin. In his heart, which was designed to be the habitation of God through the Spirit, Satan has fixed his empire. There he resides, and rules. His works are done, his interests are served. His miserable captive, led by him at his will, is hurried on from sin to sin, obeys the dictate of every vile affection, and imperious appetite ; and labors in the service of a master, whose wages is death. Is it not a blessing to be freed from such a servitude ?

Is *Rest* a blessing to the heavy-laden ? None are so heavy-laden as the sinner ; as he who lives in the habitual, allowed indulgence of sinful passions. No load is really so heavy as his load. For a time indeed he may not perceive the weight. He may be insensible to its pressure. But whenever the heart of stone is softened, then he feels his burthen ; then "he groans being burthened." He then knows by experience the full force of that exhortation, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a

wounded spirit, who can bear?" With David he then exclaims, "There is no rest in my bones by reason of my sin; for my wickednesses are gone over my head, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear." With St. Paul he then cries out, under a feeling sense of his corruptions, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Is it not a blessing to be released from such a burden?

Is the *Hope of heavenly Glory* a blessing? Without conversion from sin no such hope can really stand. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." What scriptural hope then of heavenly glory can they have, who are not "turned from their iniquities?" God by a fixed decree hath shut them out from hope. He hath solemnly declared that, "into the New Jerusalem nothing unclean shall enter;" that, "there is no peace to the wicked;" that, "his wrath abideth on them;" and that they "shall be turned into hell," "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "Know ye not (asks the Apostle) that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" In the nature of things *how* can they inherit it? "The inheritance is among them that are sanctified." *How* then can the unsanctified partake of it? Could the sensual or the covetous, the proud, or the profane, the vain, or the ambitious, could any who love and practise ungodliness, find enjoyment, or satisfaction in the presence of God, and in the society of saints and angels? Admitted into the mansions of the blessed, they would be incapable of sharing the delights of heaven. They would be wanting in those holy, and spiritual dispositions, which alone could qualify them for spiritual happiness, and could ensure their felicity. That "Fulness of Joy," with which heaven abounds, would to them be unsatisfying and offensive. Those "Rivers of Pleasure which are at God's right hand," would to them be tasteless, and insipid. Heaven would furnish them with no gratifications suited to their inclinations and desires; it would exhibit to them nothing but scenes, and sources of delight, in which they could find no pleasure; and thus would itself become a place of torment to them.

Behold then the blessing announced in the text, the blessing of conversion from sin. It is *Health*,—it is *Freedom*,—it is *Rest*:—it is the Confirmation of *Hope*; it is the Meekness for *Heaven*. We proceed to shew,

II. The Means by which this Blessing is conveyed. "God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent *Him* to bless you." God is the fountain of all goodness. "Every good, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." In his infinite love the blessing under consideration at first originated. But it is conveyed to us through Jesus Christ. He is the channel through which it flows. God in his eternal counsels having planned the work of Redemption, in the fulness of time sent his Son to execute it: "sent *Him* to bless us, in turning every one of us from his iniquities." Deliverance from sin was the great blessing, which the Son of God came into the world to dispense. He was called Jesus because "He should save his people from their sins." To the accomplishment of this merciful design, His separate offices of Prophet, Priest and King are each directed.

As *Prophet*, He enlightens, and instructs mankind. He discovers to them the evil nature, and dreadful consequences of sin. He warns them to flee from the wrath to come; sets life and death before them, a blessing and a curse; re-proves, exhorts, encourages, invites. By his word, and by His ministers He is continually calling upon sinners to turn from their iniquities, and points out to them the only means, by which they can effectually be turned.

As *Priest*, He has atoned for their past transgressions. By His precious blood-shedding He has opened a way for their reconciliation with God; and thus from the hope of a gracious reception, provides them with the strongest encouragement to turn to Him. Without this hope sinners would never be persuaded to turn from their iniquities. The thought that God is their irreconcilable enemy, far from leading them to forsake their sins, would harden and confirm them in impenitence. It is the assurance of mercy, the assurance of God's willingness to receive, and pardon sinners, which softens the heart, and disposes it to repentance. This assurance Christ in His Priestly Office has effectually furnished. He is "set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood, for the remission of sins that are past." Through

His merits and intercession sinners are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace; to cast themselves without fear on the mercy of God; and confidently to look to Him as a reconciled, and loving Father. What doubt can remain of His favorable disposition towards them; for He has given His Son to be the propitiation for their sins? Let this thought inspire them with courage, and influence their conduct. Let them now turn from their iniquities; for the Lord will receive them graciously, and will remember their sins no more.

But it is in His *Kingly Office* that Christ more especially carries on the work of deliverance from sin. Advanced to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, He hath the fulness of it at His disposal, and dispenses it according to His will. Ay the Spirit He weakens the strength of sin in the soul. By the Spirit He brings home His word with power to the heart, and applies His atonement with efficacy to the conscience. By the Spirit He convinces, and converts sinners; excites their fears; removes their prejudices; inclines them to value, and to desire the Salvation of the Gospel; helps their unbelief; enables them to choose the Lord for their portion; and effectually constrains them "to live no longer to themselves, but to Him, who died for them and rose again."

Let us next consider

III. The Persons, to whom the Blessing in the Text is offered. "God having raised up His Son Jesus, has sent Him to bless you in turning *every one of you* from his iniquities."—This expression intimates two things,

1st. That "every one" stands in need of the Blessing.

2dly. That "every one" who is willing may obtain it.

1st. *Every one* stands in need of the Blessing.

From the fall of Adam to this very hour, there never was a single individual of the human race, Christ only excepted, who stood not in need of deliverance from the power and the practice of sin. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." All men naturally, 'are in the flesh,' and consequently "cannot please God." Under the influence of the carnal mind they love, and serve sin. In this respect there is no difference. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." All, indeed, may not have equally

sinned ; not sinned alike, in the same manner, yet to the same extent. There are different degrees and shades of sin. But still in the language of the Prophet, "we all like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way." Sin has reigned in every heart ; and whatever form it may have put on, whatever direction it may take, it still is *sin*. Its nature and effects are still the same. It is transgression of the law ; it is rebellion against God ; it provokes His displeasure ; it disqualifies the sinner for happiness ; it shuts him out from Heaven. Conversion from sin then is a Blessing, of which "every one" stands in need.

2dly. "Every one" who is willing, may obtain this Blessing.

In this respect also there is no difference. "Every one," as we have already noticed, is naturally under the dominion of sin : but to "every one" offers of deliverance are sent. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."—Sinners sometimes question the *Power* of Christ to set them free. Groaning under the yoke of sin, they feel as if it never could be broken. Entangled and overcome, they are apt to fear, that lust is too deeply rooted in their soul ever to be expelled. 'Our heart,' (they cry,) 'is so hardened, and corrupt, that no power can soften, and improve it.' But "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" What is the promise? "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—At other times sinners are led to doubt the *Willingness* of Christ to deliver them ; and with the Leper are ready to say, "Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean." At least they distrust His loving kindness to *themselves*. 'Others,' (they say,) 'He will pity, and save : but for us He has no compassion left. We have sinned beyond the reach of His Mercy.'—But to "every one" is the Blessing offered. No exceptions are made. What are the repeated declarations of Christ Himself? "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Who-soever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

And now, my brethren, by way of application of the subject, are there any among you, who despise the blessing of-

fered in the text ; who, regardless of all consequences, are living in the practice of Sin, and sleeping on the brink of everlasting ruin ? How shall I awaken you to a sense of your danger ! How shall I rouse you to a consideration of the important concerns which you are neglecting ! God hath sent His Son to bless you, and you reject the Blessing. He offers to turn you from your iniquities ; and you refuse to be turned. He counsels, and reproves you ; but you set at nought all his counsel, and will have none of his reproof. You prefer sickness to health ; slavery to freedom ; toil and labor to ease, and rest. Reflect on the folly of your choice. Weigh well the guilt of it. Look forward to the consequences. While you are living in Sin, you are living without Christ, without Hope, without God in the world. Should you perish in this state, under what awful circumstances will you perish ! “Hear ye, and give ear : be not proud : for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains ; and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.”

Are there others who mistake the nature of Conversion, and consequently undervalue the Blessing offered in the Text ; who satisfied with some outward shew of righteousness make no attempt to approve their hearts towards God ? In some respects, it may be, you are different from what you formerly were. You have perhaps renounced the practice of some glaring immoralities ; you have possibly discontinued some evil habits, to which you were once addicted : you have amended some wrong tempers : you have corrected some bad dispositions—But are you *therefore* converted ? Have you *therefore* been “turned from your iniquities ?” My brethren, be not deceived. Has your heart been changed ? Has pride and sin been dethroned there ? What master are you serving in the inner man ? Has God, or the world possession of your Soul ? Have you humbly fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ ? Or are you still standing at a distance from Him ? Are you serving Him in simplicity, and godly sincerity, or are you obeying Sin in any of the lusts thereof ? Be assured, that if you allow yourself in one point *habitually* to offend, you are in fact guilty of all ; and your heart evidently is not right in the sight of God, who requires

truth and purity in the inward parts. You have never yet experienced the power of renewing grace. You are "still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."—"Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind; that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Again, there may be some who truly feel their need of the Blessing in the text, but who greatly err as to the Means of obtaining it. You lament, I would suppose, the sinful, and disordered state of your Soul, and are longing to be made whole. You groan beneath the burden of your corrupt nature, and sigh, and seek for deliverance. But you seek it not in the way in which only it is to be found. You are seeking it in your own strength, in dependance on your own resolutions and exertions, as if it were a work in your own power, and under your own control. But Conversion from sin is a work to be wrought, not *by* you, but *in* you. It is a blessing which cometh *from above*. "The preparations of the heart are from the Lord." Christ alone can turn you from your iniquities. You cannot turn yourselves. It is "He who is exalted as a Prince, and a Saviour, to give repentance unto men." To Him then apply for the Blessing. Pray to Him to give you repentance; to "bless you by turning you from your iniquities." Be earnest with Him in prayer and supplication. Cry out with the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Say with repentant Ephraim, "Turn *Thou* me, O Lord, and I shall be turned." Doubt not the power and willingness of Christ to hear, and help you; for He was sent on purpose "to bless you by turning you from your iniquities." Distrust not his compassion, for "He came to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

But lastly, are there not some among us, who are already partakers of the Blessing of which we have been speaking: some, who have already experienced in their souls the power of converting grace; and who, by the effects

produced upon their own hearts and lives, assuredly find that they are indeed, "turned from their iniquities?" My brethren, if you have thus been taught that Conversion from Sin is no imaginary work, no creature of the fancy, no transitory impression on the feelings, but a real, an inward, an abiding operation of divine Grace on the heart,—if the Spirit itself thus bears witness with your spirit, that you are the children of God, born of his Spirit, renewed to his likeness, and made partakers of his nature—if things be so; you have indeed cause to rejoice, and be thankful. Rejoice however with trembling; and be not high-minded, but fear. Think not as "though you had already attained, either were already perfect." "Count not yourself to have apprehended: but this one thing do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is indeed an encouraging thought that "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the end:" that He, who hath hitherto wrought in you "to will and to do," will of his mercy continue to work in you: but bear in mind the Apostle's command in connection with this subject, "work out your own Salvation with fear, and trembling." "Be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "Occupy" till your Lord come. Use and improve the talents which he has committed to your trust, in His service, and to His Glory. If he has set you free from the yoke of sin, it is that you may the more readily and devotedly take his yoke, and bear his burden, and do his work. By perseverance in holiness, by a patient continuance in well-doing, evidence to the world, and to yourselves, the reality of your Conversion, the sincerity of your profession, your growth in grace and godliness. By giving all diligence to these things, by progressively adding one Christian attainment to another, by daily abounding in every good word and work, "make your calling and election sure." "So shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." So shall you be included in the number of those happy and triumphant souls, to each

of whom these joyful words shall be graciously addressed,
 “ Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the
 joy of thy Lord.”

SERMON XVII.

Esau Despising his Birth-Right.

HEBREWS, xii. 17.

For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected : for he found no Place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears.

THE person here spoken of is Esau ; and the circumstances referred to are those related in the twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis. The subject is one which requires explanation. For the circumstances themselves, as well as the Apostle's mention of them in the text, are often much misunderstood. On hearing the account which is given of Esau's losing the blessing, and of his conduct on that occasion, persons who are not well acquainted with the whole transaction, who do not attentively consider it, are apt to feel for him a degree of compassion to which his character does not entitle him : while the language of the text is understood to countenance this opinion by stating, as it is supposed, that though he were a penitent he could obtain no forgiveness ; and consequently to contradict the general declarations of Scripture, that all who repent shall assuredly find mercy.—In discoursing on this subject, I shall endeavor

I. To remove these misunderstandings, and

II. To point out some of the practical admonitions, which the example of Esau, when rightly understood, suggests to our consideration.

I. The best way of correcting error is to give a plain statement of the truth. Accordingly in endeavoring to re-

more the misunderstandings of which I have spoken, I shall set before you as clearly as I can, a short account of the particulars on which they are founded.

Esaú was the eldest son of the Patriarch Isaac, and on this account was considered as entitled to the birth-right. This birth-right was something of a peculiar nature : and a clear notion of it is absolutely necessary in order to a right understanding of the point in question.—The Birth-right then does not appear to have had any particular reference to the property and possessions of Isaac, nor to have contained in it any immediate worldly advantage. It referred to the promises of God, and to the blessings included in them—those promises, which God had originally given to Abraham, and had afterwards in these words renewed unto Isaac : “ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and will bless thee : for unto thee and to thy seed will I give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father. And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries : and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”* This revelation contained three distinct promises. 1st. A promise of the present favor, and protection of God to him to whom the promise belonged. 2dly. A promise of great future blessings to his posterity : and 3dly, a promise of being the forefather of Jesus Christ ; that predicted Seed of the Woman, who should bruise the Serpent’s head, and who should be the Joy and Salvation of all the ends of the earth. These were the promises, which were given to Isaac ; and it was an interest in these promises, which formed the Birth-right of which we speak ; and of which, as no express assignment of it had hitherto been made, Esau, being the first born son, was the presumptive heir. He was probably considered by others and by himself as the person, to whom these promises would of course descend.

Such then was the Birth-right. Let us now see in what manner Esau regarded it. We can have no doubt *how* he ought to have regarded it. He doubtless ought to have esteemed an interest in these promises as the most invaluable inheritance. He should have looked upon it as his richest

* Genesis, xxvi. 3, 4.

treasure, his highest honor, his noblest privilege. He should have clung to it as his fondest hope, his dearest possession ; and in comparison of it should have been willing to suffer the loss of all things, and have counted every thing else as dross, and of no value. But was this the case ? Was it thus, was it with these views, with these feelings, that Esau regarded his birth-right ? No : we are expressly taught that it was not. He made light of the divine promises, and of all the blessings and privileges contained in them. He accounted them of no value, and treated them with the most profane contempt. In proof of this assertion we have one fact related, which distinctly marks the character of the man. We are reminded in the verse before the text, that "for one morsel of bread he had sold his birth-right." In the account of this transaction,* we find, that on a certain occasion Esau being faint and hungry, actually parted with all his interest in these promises to his brother Jacob for a mess of pottage. How could he have more clearly shewn his utter disregard and contempt of the divine Promises ? He reconciled himself to his brother's proposition of parting with this privilege, by profanely asking, "What profit shall this birth-right do to me ?" And having completed the impious bargain, he felt no concern, no remorse at what he had done ; for so the language of inspiration seems evidently to imply, when it is said, "He did eat, and drink, and rose up, and went his way." Especially, when it is emphatically added, "Thus Esau despised his birth-right."—Now we must remember, that this event took place probably at an early period of his life ; while his conduct afterwards, so far as it is stated, shewed the same irreligious disposition. At forty years of age, without any regard to the pious example and wishes of his parents, he took two wives of the daughters of the land ; and by thus joining himself to the heathen and idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan, testified his unbelief and contempt of the revealed will of the Almighty. Nor from this time, so far as we are told, did he ever bestow a thought on his birth-right ; ever felt regret at having sold it ; or expressed a wish to recover it ; till after an interval of almost forty years, Isaac, supposing himself to be at the point of death, proceeded to bless

* Genesis, xxv. 29.

his sons. Then Esau, through his father's mistaken partiality in favor of the first-born, was directed to prepare himself for receiving the blessing : and having now, as it is probable, reflected that this blessing contained in it a promise of prosperity to his children, and of their superiority over those of his brother, he was very desirous of obtaining it. It is not necessary to state the means by which his expectations and desires were disappointed. As to those means, we cannot approve of them.* We cannot but decidedly blame both Jacob and Rebecca for the imposition which they practised on Isaac. But at the same time we must surely see and own the wisdom and the justice of God in preventing Isaac from inadvertently bestowing the Blessing on One, who was so wholly unfit for it. When Esau indeed discovered the imposition which had been practised, and found that the Birth-right had been actually confirmed to Jacob, then he gave vent to the most bitter lamentations ; complained of the subtilty of his brother ; and insinuated how hardly and unjustly he had been used. But what ground was there for such insinuations and complaints ? With what justice could he complain of being deprived of a privilege which he had never valued, which he had never studied to obtain ? With what shadow of reason could he insinuate, that he was hardly used in not being permitted to inherit a Blessing, which he had always treated with the most marked and irreverent contempt ? Consider for a moment *what* was the privilege, which he had thus profanely despised. Recollect that in selling his birth-right he had wickedly given up his personal interest in the favor and protection of the Almighty, and in the Blessing of the predicted Saviour. He had virtually declared that he could do without these things. He had in fact cast the divine Promises behind his back, and had shewed that he preferred the most trifling sensual gratification to the Divine favor and love. Bear in mind how long he had been living and acting in this spirit. For above seventy years he had thus been " without God in the world : " and was he now to come and claim the Blessing for his own, and complain that he was unjustly used because it was refused him ? Is the Almighty to be thus contemned, and insulted, and presumptuously called to an ac-

* See Vol. I. Sermon XXX.

count by his rebellious creatures? And shall we pretend to be more merciful than our Maker, and with a mistaken and an unholy pity, presume to take the part of those, whom He excludes from mercy? Far be such a conduct from us. I think, my brethren, you must by this time see that there is no just ground for the misunderstanding which I have stated above; and I trust that if you should hitherto have been disposed to entertain a thought of Esau's being unjustly treated, you will henceforth for ever dismiss it from your mind.

But perhaps you say, 'Esau repented. Is there not pardon, and mercy, for the penitent? The Scriptures require us to repent of our sins, and promise, that if we do repent, we shall be forgiven. Yet the text tells us that Esau found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.'—This was the other misunderstanding which I stated. And is it not a great misunderstanding? In fact so far as the text is concerned, there is no ground whatever for supposing that Esau was a penitent: for the repentance of which the Apostle speaks has no reference to the state of *Esau's heart*; it refers merely to a change in his *Father's mind*. "Esau found no place of repentance:" that is, he found no way of revoking the act which his father Isaac had done. He could not prevail with him to change the direction which he had now given to the Blessing; to take it back from Jacob, and to bestow it on him. He could not alter the divine purposes, and his Father's mind, though he sought to do it carefully with tears.—This, and this only is the meaning of the expression in the text. And so far therefore as the supposition of Esau's repentance rests on this ground, it is totally without foundation. Nor if we look at the particulars of his conduct, shall we find any better ground. It is true "he lift up his voice and wept;" "he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry." But tears alone do not prove a man a penitent. He who truly repents, will condemn himself; will take shame to himself; will confess his guilt; will grieve that he has offended God; and will earnestly desire forgiveness. But do we find any of these things, in Esau's language and behavior? We see in him no confession of Sin, no acknowledgment of guilt, no cry to God for mercy. Instead of accusing himself, he throws all the blame on Jacob. Instead of condemning his

own profaneness, in having sold his birth-right, he merely complains of his brother's injustice in having treacherously taken it from him : and so far from repenting of his Sin before God, he secretly resolves in his heart, whenever a favorable opportunity shall offer, to avenge himself, and to slay his brother.—Esau then was not a penitent. His tears were the tears of disappointment and vexation, not of contrition and godly sorrow. His grief was that of a person who finds too late that he has made a foolish and a ruinous bargain ; the grief of a criminal at the place of execution, who bitterly laments the punishment which his folly and wickedness have brought upon him.

We see then with how little truth it can be said, that the example of Esau contradicts the general tenor of the Scriptures, by giving countenance to the supposition that any truly penitent Sinner shall be rejected. In fact he is brought here as an instance of an *impenitent sinner* : of one who, from the prevailing love of sin, and of the world, suffers his religious advantages to go unimproved ; profanely slight, and resists the grace of God ; nor discovers the folly and wickedness of his conduct till it is too late to alter it, and to escape the dreadful consequences. It is in this light that we must view the example of Esau, if we hope to profit by it. And accordingly I now proceed

II. To shew some of the Practical Admonitions, which his example, when thus understood, suggests to our consideration.

1st. We are here admonished that we also have a birth-right ; a birth-right, as important in itself, and as valuable to us, as that of Esau was to him. We have exceeding great and precious promises given to us, to every one of us, to high, and low, to rich and poor, (for there is no difference) even the promise of God in Christ. Consider what these promises are ; the promise of every thing pertaining to life and godliness ; the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come ; the promise of pardon of sin ; of reconciliation with God ; of his special favor, and protection ; of adoption into his family ; of the renewal and sanctification of our natures ; of the consolations of the Spirit ; of victory over death, and the grave ; of everlasting life, and glory in the kingdom of Heaven. These are the Blessings, promised in the Gospel-Covenant ; Blessings,

in which, as professed Christians, we have a presumptive interest. At baptism our name was put into the charter-deed : and on our attaining to that Faith and Repentance, which are the stipulated requisites, we may plead our title to the blessings promised, and may claim them for our own. This is *our birth-right* ; in substance the same with Esau's, but far surpassing it in the light and clearness with which it is revealed. In a word, our birth-right is our privilege of knowing, worshipping, and serving God in the Gospel of his Son : the opportunity, with which we are favored of working out our Salvation with fear and trembling : the time and the means vouchsafed to us, for securing to our souls an everlasting inheritance in the world of light and glory.

2dly. We are here reminded of the *Way* in which we may despise this Birth-right. We have seen how Esau despised his. He made light of it. He accounted it of no value. He sold it for a mess of pottage. He bartered it away for a morsel of bread. He deliberately preferred worldly, sensual, temporal gratifications, to the divine favor and promises. This was his sin. It proved him to be a wicked man, an irreligious person, without any real fear of God, or faith in His word. Let us then remember, that if we act in the same manner, in the same spirit with Esau, it will prove us to be persons of the same character with him. If with him we sell our Birth-right, we shall with him be accounted by the Lord "profane."—And yet how many, it is to be feared, are acting thus, and treading in Esau's steps ! How many are making light of Christian privileges, and Christian prospects ; setting no value on the means of grace and the hopes of glory, and bartering away the promise of an eternal inheritance for some trifling, earthly, perishing possession or enjoyment ! Think not that you are free from Esau's sin, merely because you may not have sold your interest in the Gospel by some express and formal contract as he did. You may be virtually doing the same thing. You may be habitually renouncing Christ and his Gospel. You may be living in a profane disregard of his offers and promises. And this you most assuredly are doing, if for the sake of worldly things, you are neglecting your souls and Eternity : if you knowingly suffer any "root of bitterness" to remain within ; any unmortified lust, any unsancti-

fiel temper, to retain its power in your heart. Let us bear in mind, that there is no serving God and Mammon, Christ and Belial : if you love the one, you will hate the other. You cannot at the same time be walking after the flesh and after the spirit. You cannot at the same time be both godly and ungodly. You cannot be the disciples of Christ, and yet slight his commands, his invitations, or his promises. You cannot duly esteem these things, and yet live in the neglect of them. Neither can you be said to observe them, if you are habitually ready to neglect them whenever they may happen to interfere with your worldly interests, or sensual inclinations. Every one of the persons in the parable, who pleaded their land, their oxen, or their worldly connections, as an excuse for not coming to the marriage-feast, was an Esau. And they all are intended to represent such as like him despise their Birth-right : such as have in them no real love of the truth, no supreme regard for spiritual things ; but who, busied with the cares, or amused with the trifles of this world, suffer their day of grace to pass away unimproved, and avail not themselves of the mercy and long-suffering of God in the Gospel to make a seasonable provision for their immortal souls.

Sdly. We are here reminded of the *Consequences* of thus despising our Birth-right. Men may now make light of Christ and of his Gospel, of their souls and of Eternity : but it will not be always so. A time will come, when they will see and feel the value of these things. In the hour of death, at the day of Judgment, the vail will be torn from their eyes ; and things will appear in their true colors. Then the vanity of the world, the evil of sin, and the misery of their foolish choice, will stare them in the face. When nothing to which they have here trusted, can any longer yield them satisfaction and enjoyment ; when the world and they are parted for ever ; when the bottomless pit shall have opened its jaws to receive them ; when their sentence is about to be pronounced ; when the ministers of vengeance are standing ready to execute it ; then will they be convinced of their folly ; then will they bitterly lament it ; then, perhaps, will they put in a plea, and pray for mercy ; then will they begin to cry, " Lord, Lord, open to us."—But will the plea be admitted ? Will the cry be heard ? No. " Ye know how that Esau afterward, when

he would have inherited the blessing, was rejected." And so will it be with all who have walked in his steps. "They will be rejected." Like him, "they will find no place of repentance, though they may seek it carefully with tears." Hear what the Judge has already declared of them,—“Because I have called and they refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded: but they have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at their calamity, and will mock when their fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.”—My brethren, let us take warning by these awful truths. Be admonished in time. If, like Esau, you have hitherto despised your Birth-right; if, like him, you are still persisting in affronting God, and neglecting your souls, think of that bitter, that endless sorrow, that weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, which you are laying up of yourselves. Think of these things; and now while you have opportunity, flee from the wrath to come. Redeem the time, while time remains. Much time, much opportunity, may have been wasted. But still even now it is not too late, if you set about the work in earnest, to recover the ground which has been lost. It is not too late to repent, and turn to God, and save your souls. O seek Him while He may be found. Certain it is that all who seek Him with the heart, shall find Him. Certain it is that Jesus Christ, our merciful Friend, our compassionate Mediator, our almighty Saviour, is ready to receive every repentant and believing sinner, every returning, humbled prodigal, and to give to him a name and a place in His family. This is the message which the ministers of the Gospel are commissioned to deliver. Receive it not in vain. Slight not the grace of God thus continued to you. Refuse not Him who speaketh from heaven. By faith and repentance make good your title to the promises of the Gospel. Claim your Birth-right. Live up to your privileges. So shall you inherit the Blessing.

SERMON XVIII.

The Humble Enquirer after Wisdom encouraged.

JAMES, i. 5, 6.

If any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally and upbraideth not : and it shall be given him. But let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering.

IT is one of the peculiar excellencies of the Gospel, that its directions and promises are so framed and delivered, as to give every encouragement to the humble and teachable disciple ; and at the same time to leave the proud and presumptuous objector without excuse. Thus, while it “fills the hungry with good things, it sends the rich empty away.” We find in the text an illustration of this remark. St. James here exhibits a specimen of the way in which the Scriptures constantly address the humble and serious Enquirer after divine Truth. I shall consider the words as containing

I. A description of the Person addressed.

II. The Direction given to him.

III. The Encouragement to follow it.

I. The Person addressed is thus described, “If any of you lack Wisdom.”

Wisdom is sometimes used in Scripture in a limited sense, and is put for the whole of Religion, real, vital, practical religion. And the reason is clear, for nothing but such religion is, in fact true Wisdom, and really deserves the name. But it is also used in a more general and comprehensive sense, and is employed to signify every kind of religious knowledge, instruction, or experience. And this is the sense in which we must understand it in the text. To lack wisdom is to be without it, to be in want of it. So that the person addressed in the text is described as being one, who stands in need of religious instruction. There is some doctrine concerning which he wants information ; some part of

his duty, on which he is deficient in knowledge ; some point, respecting which he is ignorant and needs to be taught.

But it is one thing to lack wisdom, and another to *know* that we lack it. Men may be very ignorant on religious matters, without being sensible of their ignorance. They may be fools, and yet deem themselves wise. They may be blind, and yet say that they see. And so long as this is the case with a man, he will never look upon himself as the person addressed in the text. He will neither follow the direction, nor value the encouragement which it affords. Before he does these things, he must feel that he lacks wisdom.

The person then here addressed, may be thus more accurately described. He is one, who is sensible of his spiritual ignorance ; who knows that he stands in need of religious instruction, and anxiously desires to be taught. Now, my brethren, is such the case with any of you ? Do any of you feel that you lack wisdom ? There are many ways in which you may feel your need of it. I will mention some of the more common.

You may feel your ignorance in respect to the doctrines of the Gospel, and may wish for clearer information about them. Your eyes may have been partly opened, just enough to shew you how little you knew as you ought ; and to raise in you a desire of knowing more. Like the man, whose blindness our Saviour began to take away. "You may see men as trees walking." You may see something of God's grace and mercy in the Gospel : but you see it dimly, and this makes you long to see it more clearly. You wish that you could understand this or that point more distinctly ; that such a doubt were removed ; that such a difficulty were obviated ; or that such a doctrine were made plainer. Your soul is athirst for living water, and you long to draw out of the wells of Salvation. Thus you may lack wisdom.

Or perhaps you are in doubt as to some practical step in your conduct. Two or more ways offer themselves to your choice : but you know not which of them to prefer. You would gladly fix upon that, which would be most pleasing to God, and most profitable to your own soul. But you know not which that would be. After balancing all sides in your mind, you are still at a loss how to decide. You cannot clearly discern which is the path of duty, nor satisfy your-

self which course in the end will be best. Your conscience is alive and tender. You would gladly do right, but you fear to do wrong. You hesitate, and are in suspense, and anxiously wish for further light, and more specific information. Thus you may lack Wisdom.

Or perhaps you feel your ignorance in another way. You are under trial and affliction. You know that the visitation is from God, and that it is sent generally for your spiritual good. But you know not what particular good it is intended to produce. You are sensible that the Lord is contending with you; but you cannot distinctly see *wherefore* he contendeth. You acknowledge the Lord's hand in the correction. You meekly submit to it, and seriously desire to reap from it the benefit which it is meant to convey. But you are at a loss how to proceed. You would gladly improve the affliction to the good of your soul; but you know not how. Here again you lack Wisdom.

Or further, you may stand in need of instruction in another way. You may be called to some arduous and difficult service. You may be required to fill some station, or to discharge some duty to which you feel yourself utterly incompetent. You may be sensible that God's glory and your own peace, depend on your executing the office imposed on you in a suitable manner: but at the same time you may be conscious, that to execute it thus, requires a larger measure of prudence, or skill, or fortitude, or perseverance than you naturally possess. You dare not desert your post, but you know not how to fill it aright. You are afraid of making some mistake, which may discredit Religion, or wound your conscience. You long for such increase of foresight and knowledge as may qualify you for performing your duty with comfort and credit. Thus you may lack Wisdom.

To repeat then the question, Do any of you, my brethren, in one or more of these ways, or in any other way, feel and lament your ignorance, and seriously wish for further light and knowledge? If so, you may consider yourself the person addressed in the text. Observe then,

II. The Direction given to him, "Let him ask of God."

God is the Fountain and Source of all Wisdom: and He only is the Giver of Wisdom. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from th-

Father of Lights." We are accustomed to pray to Him as the God, "from whom *all good counsels*, as well as all holy desires, and all just works do proceed." It is to God then that you must apply under your wants, for He only can supply them. He only can give to you the wisdom which you lack. He only, by his Spirit, can enlighten the darkened mind, can open the eyes of the understanding, and can communicate to the soul a clear and distinct perception of heavenly things. Those who have been taught the Truth as it is in Jesus, have been "taught of God:" without whose teaching they never would have learned it. Our Saviour tells his disciples, that it was "*given* to them to see the mysteries of the kingdom of God:" and the reason why, the wise and prudent could not receive the knowledge of the Gospel, is expressly said to have been because it was "*hidden* from them" by God, who on the other hand "*revealed* it to babes," to the humble and the simple.* St. Paul could not understand the Doctrine of the Cross, until God revealed Christ in his heart. The wisdom then which you want, must come to you from God. St. James with this view expressly calls it the "*Wisdom, which is from above*," and in the text directs you to ask it of God.

The meaning of this direction is, that in an humble sense of your own ignorance and weakness, you must call upon God in prayer for the blessings which you need. You must confess your blindness and foolishness to Him; must open to Him all your wants, and troubles, and fears; and must pray for light and grace to instruct, direct, and strengthen you. And you must act thus, not only in a general way, but with a reference to your *particular* circumstances and wants. You must be earnest and importunate, and explicit in your prayers to God, opening to Him all your mind, and pouring out your whole soul before Him.

You must pray also in Faith. Faith is a qualification expressly added by the Apostle as absolutely necessary to the efficacy of prayer. Let "*him who asks Wisdom of God, ask in Faith, nothing wavering*." Let him not draw near to God with a doubtful and an unbelieving mind. Let Him not distrust either the Power or the Truth of the Almighty. Let him firmly believe that as God is able to sup-

* Matt. xi. 25.

ply every want, so He is faithful to fulfil every promise. Has He not revealed Himself as "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think?" Is it not written that "He is faithful who has promised." "Hath He said, and shall he not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" To pray to God without having a fixed persuasion of His Power and Faithfulness, is to dishonor His name, and instead of pleasing, to offend Him. The man who thus questions the Divine Perfections "is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed:" and, "let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." If you would pray with acceptance, you must pray in Faith, and waver not. You must firmly believe that God alone giveth wisdom; that from Him alone you can obtain it; and that without prayer to Him it will never be vouchsafed. In these respects, in your judgment on these points you must not waver.

But while you are directed thus to ask God for Wisdom suited to your particular need, it is not intended that you should do nothing else. It is not intended that you should merely pray for knowledge without using such other means as may help you to obtain it. It is indeed true that God alone giveth Wisdom: but He most commonly confers this blessing, as well as every other, in the use and exercise of appointed means. When He directs you to pray to Him for Wisdom, He expects that you should, at the same time, diligently employ all such other helps as He affords you for procuring it. He expects that you should consult with those, whose experience renders them more capable of giving you instruction, of removing your doubts and difficulties, and of pointing out what is proper or necessary to be done. He expects that for the same purpose, you should diligently attend on the ministry of His word, and carefully search the Scriptures. It is in the use of these means, that He generally conveys light and knowledge to the mind. While you pray then for Wisdom, use these means, and in the use of them, accompanied with fervent prayer, wait for the blessing, which you seek. For, consider,

III. The Encouragement which you have to follow this Direction. "He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given you."

These words contain the strongest Encouragement to

every humble suppliant. Such persons are apt to be full of fears, and to distrust their right to favor and acceptance. Their very humility causes them to doubt, whether their prayers will be heard, and suggests to them many grounds for despondency and alarm. But the text furnishes an answer to every scruple; meets every doubt; and holds out the strongest assurances of a favorable reception and gracious answer.

Perhaps, my brethren, you fear that though you pray for Wisdom, you shall not obtain it. Now what is the ground on which your fear is built.

Possibly you say, or think with yourself thus. "God giveth Wisdom. He only can give it to me—I greatly long for it; and would earnestly pray for it. But how can I venture to hope that He will give it to me: to me who am so unworthy, so insignificant, so evil? He will give it to others when they ask. But he will justly overlook me. He will surely disregard my prayers, and not bestow His gift on me." But in reply to this language it is written "He giveth to all men." No exceptions are made to any, why then should you make exceptions to yourself. God is no respecter of persons. It is not said, that He gives to one and not to another,—to another and not to you, but to all. The address and the direction are made in terms which include you as well as others. "If any of you lack Wisdom," whosoever he be "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men." Do not suppose then (for there is no ground for such a supposition) that you are shut out. Comply with the direction, and you will find God as ready to give to you, as to others.

But perhaps you are discouraged on another ground. You say 'My wants are so numerous. My ignorance is so great. There are so many things, on which I need instruction. How can I hope that God will vouchsafe to me a blessing in so large a measure?' It is expressly said in answer to this question: "He giveth *liberally*." He does not confine his bounty within any narrow limits. The only measure of it is our need. As He is ready to give to all men, so is He ready to give *all* that they require. "Open thy mouth wide (He cries,) and I will fill it." We are not straitened in Him, but in ourselves. We receive but little, because we ask but little. The more we ask the more

we honor God, and the more we shall receive from Him. "Ask then and ye shall have, that your joy may be full."

But, it may be, that your fears arise from another quarter. You not only feel that your ignorance is great : but you are also conscious that it is far greater than it ought to be. You are sensible that it has been much increased by your own past neglect. You have failed to make use of the means vouchsafed to you. Had you duly improved them, you had not now been so uninformed. You have let slip many opportunities of procuring religious wisdom : and can you now dare to hope that God will bestow it on you ? Yes, you may dare to hope it. "He giveth liberally and upbraideth not." He does not reproach any with their ignorance or past neglect. He mercifully overlooks and forgets their sin. How kind and gentle was our Blessed Saviour in teaching his Disciples ! How patiently did he bear with their dullness, and mistakes ! How graciously did He condescend often to repeat the same instructions ! We find Him upbraiding the people, for their obstinacy and impenitence, in having seen His miracles without being convinced by them. We find Him upbraiding his Disciples for their unbelief and hardness of heart, in not receiving the testimony of those, who had seen Him after he was risen from the dead. But we never find Him upbraiding any humble, serious Enquirer with his ignorance, or dullness. To such He was always mild and condescending. He received them kindly, and gave them the most gracious encouragement. Lay aside then your fears. Though ignorant, though heretofore negligent, you will not meet with reproaches. Go boldly to the throne of grace. Pray for wisdom : lift up your voice for understanding. You may condemn yourself ; but God will not condemn you. You may be filled with self-upbraidings, but God is a God of mercy. He upbraideth not.

But after every thing which has been said, you may still have some secret grounds of distrust and fear. You may still think that there is reason to doubt whether God will hear your prayers. You may yet fear that He will not give you Wisdom. But your doubts and fears are certainly groundless. For in answer to every objection which you can urge, it is expressly said, "It shall be given him." Now the promise standeth sure. What God hath promised,

He will most certainly perform. "If any man lack Wisdom, let him ask of God—and it shall be given him." No imperfection or infirmity in the manner of asking, no previous guilt in him who asks, no secret decree of God shall prevent him from receiving this blessing. "It shall be given him." For as our Saviour hath elsewhere said, "Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, the door shall be opened." Be then of good courage. Plead this promise in prayer with God. Wait on Him to fulfil it to you. Doubt not that he will fulfil it: "for He is faithful, who has promised."

On the whole, my brethren, are we not most ready to admit, that the passage on which I have been discoursing, is of a highly important, and interesting tendency? How could the humble Enquirer after divine truth and divine assistance be more effectually encouraged, than by the assurance, that "God giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and that it shall be given him?" May all ye, who are seeking after heavenly Wisdom, take to yourselves the full encouragement which this assurance is able to minister. Rely firmly on it. Let the certainty of success engage you to persist in a faithful and diligent use of the means appointed. Keep close to the Word of God. Wait humbly upon Him. Be instant in prayer. So shall you grow in grace and knowledge. Your doubts shall vanish. Your difficulties shall disappear. Your light shall shine more and more unto the perfect day. You shall become truly wise, even wise unto Salvation.

On the other hand, how can proud and presumptuous objectors be more decisively answered than by the declaration in the text? They object to God as a hard master, as One who requires of them more than they are able to perform. They object to the precepts of Scripture as unreasonably severe, to the doctrines as above their comprehension. They say, 'We have no abilities for understanding the one, no strength for discharging the other. We are unlearned. We know little or nothing of these things: but our ignorance will be our excuse. God will not require us to do more than we know.'—But to such reasoners it may be answered—"The Lord giveth wisdom." He giveth to all men liberally. Have you asked it of Him? have you

earnestly and faithfully prayed to Him to take away your ignorance, to lighten your darkness, to deliver you from "all hardness of heart and contempt of his Holy word and commandment?" Have you desired to become truly wise? And have you humbly yielded yourself to the teaching and guidance of God's Holy Spirit? If you have not done these things, if your own conscience tells you that you have never *thus* sought Wisdom from above: what do your excuses avail? To what do your objections amount? They only expose the obstinacy and disobedience of your hearts. They only shew that you love darkness rather than light.

Here is the sum and root of the matter. You are yet in your sins. you are yet in the flesh. You are in a carnal and an unrenewed state. You have no faith. You must be born again. You must have that new heart and that new spirit, which God alone can impart to you. O pray to Him to impart it to you. Humbly pray to Him, that you may be born again of His Spirit. Seek the Wisdom which is from above. God is as ready to give it to you as to others. Why, when He offers it to you, do you refuse to take it? Why, when He invites you to Himself do you refuse to come? My brethren, while I am speaking, may He mercifully turn and dispose your heart! So will you be turned indeed: So will you be disposed in truth to seek Him. So will He turn to you: and will be found of you, a God of mercy, truth, and love.

SERMON XIX.

The Acceptable Year and the Day of Vengeance.

ISAIAH, lxi. 1, 2. in part.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me—to proclaim the Acceptable Year of the Lord, and the Day of Vengeance of our God,

IT has justly been remarked, that there are no denunciations of wrath to be met with in Scripture more severe than those which were delivered by Christ Himself. In confirmation of this remark let us remember that the same lips which pronounced the gracious invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," pronounced also that most awful expostulation, "Ye Serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell?" He who declared, that whosoever "believeth and is baptized, shall be saved," hath declared also, that He "who believeth not, shall be damned." He, who will hereafter say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you," will also say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." This remark will fully justify the ministers of the Gospel (if justification be wanted) in setting forth "the terrors of the Lord;" while it ought to silence those, who would presumptuously blame him for so doing. In fact, they cannot censure him for discharging this part of his office, without censuring Christ himself. Nor would Christ have fulfilled the predictions respecting his own ministry, had he confined himself to the prophesying of smooth things: for we find it expressly foretold in the text, that He should be anointed to proclaim "not only the acceptable year of the Lord," but also "the day of vengeance of our God." Whence we may justly infer, that to alarm as well as to comfort, to hold forth the threatenings no less than the promises, the judgments no less than the consolations of

Scripture, is the duty and the office of the preacher of the Gospel.

To discharge this duty, to fulfil this office, on the present occasion among you, my brethren, for your benefit, and to the glory of Jesus Christ, shall be my humble endeavor : and with this view, I purpose, (and may the Spirit of God assist and bless the purpose !) to set before you life and death, a blessing and a curse ; to proclaim to you, in the language of the text on the one hand, " The acceptable year of the Lord," and on the other, " The day of vengeance of our God."—Let me begin with endeavoring to give a general explanation of the two periods here stated, and to shew their respective meaning.

I. The acceptable Year of the Lord.

The Prophet, in using this expression, seems evidently to have alluded to that divine institution, which formed so remarkable a feature in the Jewish dispensation, the Year of Jubilee. This institution, which is supposed to have derived its name from some peculiar sound of the trumpet with which it was proclaimed, was appointed to take place in every fiftieth year : and it might be called in a very appropriate sense " the acceptable year." For it was a year of general release ; a year of general restitution to forfeited privileges and to lost possessions. In this year not only every Israelite who had been reduced to a state of servitude or bondage, was set free, and restored to his liberty and friends ; but every estate also, which from any cause had been alienated, reverted to its original possessor, or to his family. These were the words in which the institution was appointed, " Thou shalt cause the Trumpet of the Jubilee to sound, in the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of Atonement, shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. It shall be a Jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family."* Surely a year thus divinely appointed for such important purposes, and bringing with it such distinguishing privileges, might well be called " the acceptable year of the Lord : " and with very singular propriety might

* Lev. xxv. 9, 10.

the Prophet, when speaking of the office of Christ, allude to this institution, as illustrating the blessings of that dispensation, which He, by His preaching, would introduce. In fact, the whole institution of the Jubilee was a *typical* institution. While it served to distinguish and to benefit the people to whom it was prescribed, it was designed also to exhibit to them a lively representation of the spiritual privileges which the Gospel would bring with it. What indeed are those privileges, but a deliverance from bondage, and a restoration to our original inheritance? What does the Gospel propose, but to redeem us from sin, and to bring us to heaven? The Gospel finds us in a state of spiritual bondage, by nature and by practice sinners, bound over unto judgment, and under the dominion of sin. But it offers to free us from this state. It "proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound." It offers to deliver us from condemnation, from the strength and power of sin, from the tyranny of Satan, from the sting of death, from the prison of the grave, from the pains of hell! On the other hand, it also opens to us the kingdom of heaven. It proposes to invest us with a new title to this our forfeited inheritance. It promises to put us in possession of it, and perfectly to qualify us for the enjoyment of its pure and spiritual delights. Such are the privileges, such are the blessings, which the Gospel brings with it. And after this statement, there can be no difficulty in showing what is meant by the period mentioned in the text. "The acceptable year of the Lord," in the sense in which the Prophet uses the expression, evidently denotes the period of the Gospel dispensation; the times, during which the spiritual privileges of the Gospel should be freely offered to all who will accept them. This period Christ proclaimed, when coming into Galilee He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and said, "The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." This period He proclaimed, when in the synagogue of Nazareth, He declared to those who were present, that the passage connected with the text was in that day fulfilled in their ears. This period He proclaimed throughout the whole course of His ministry. This period He commanded His Apostles to proclaim, saying to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every crea-

ture." This period He has since continued to proclaim by the publication of His written word, and by the voice of his faithful ministers ; one part of whose office, like His own, has ever been, and still is, to preach "the acceptable year of the Lord."

But there is another Period also to be proclaimed,

II. "The day of vengeance of our God."

We find in the writings of the Prophets, frequent mention made of "a Day of Vengeance;" thus in the thirty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, the Prophet, in the midst of the most tremendous description of predicted Judgments declares, "for it is the *Day of the Lord's Vengeance*, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." So again, in the sixty-third chapter, we find the Lord Himself using this language, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the People there was none with Me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in My fury: and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the *Day of Vengeance* is in mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come." In like manner, in the forty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah, we meet with the following passage. "For this is the *Day of the Lord God of Hosts, a Day of Vengeance*, that He may avenge Him of his adversaries." And so again in the fifty-first chapter. "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity: for this is the *time of the Lord's Vengeance*; He will render unto her a recompense." To adduce more passages on this subject would be superfluous. Not only the Prophetical Writings, but the Scriptures throughout confirm the same truth. They all with one voice speak of an appointed Period, by whatever name it may be called, whether as in the text, "the Day of Vengeance," or as in other places, "the Day of Wrath," the "Day of Recompense," the "Day of Indignation," the "Day of the Lord;" in which the Almighty will arise to Judgment, and will avenge Himself upon His enemies. Such a Period, Christ, according to the text, was anointed to proclaim. Such a period He did proclaim. He distinctly predicted two events, in which these denunciations of Judgment would be awfully accomplished. One was the Destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish Church and State. For a season the Jews would hear the joyful sound

of the Jubilee Trumpet. The acceptable year of the Lord would be proclaimed, the Gospel would be preached to them. But when, by their persevering rejection of Christ and of His offered blessings, they should have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath would come upon them to the uttermost. "These," says Christ, speaking of this time of unprecedented calamities, "these are the Days of Vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."* The other event, which Christ predicted, was that consummation of wrath which at the last days are to be poured out on the corrupt and apostate part of the Christian Church; which, having long abused, and at length having rejected the Grace of the Gospel, is to be visited with the most tremendous Judgments. This will, indeed, be a *Day of Vengeance*, and was proclaimed by Christ in a subsequent part of the same prophecy, when He declares that the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled, "there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea, and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

These are two instances in which Christ proclaimed "the Day of Vengeance of our God;" and thus so far complied with the prediction in the text. But these instances form not the only accomplishment of the Prophecy. It was not in proclaiming these periods of vengeance only, that Christ would have fulfilled the spiritual office assigned to him. There was another period to be proclaimed by him: a period, which may most emphatically be stiled "the Day of Vengeance of our God:" a period, in comparison with which, the temporal calamities which have been inflicted on the Jewish, or are to be inflicted on the Christian Apostate Church, are objects of no consideration: a period, the consequences of which, will be so tremendously awful, that the greatest extremities of suffering in this world, will appear to have been only types and shadows of them. And what is this period, but the "Day of Judgment," "the day of the

* Luke, xxi. 22.

revelation of the righteous Judgment of God : " the day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and will render to every one according to his works : the day, in which he will call men to account for their profane neglect, or their contemptuous abuse of his mercy : in which he will silence their vain and impious excuses ; will expose the incorrigible enmity and impenitence of their hearts ; and will pour upon them the fury of his jealousy and anger, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, without remedy, without mitigation, without end. Behold " the day of Vengeance of our God." This day Christ proclaimed. He proclaimed it as that day in which " the Son of man shall come in His glory with his holy angels with him ; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." He proclaimed it as that day in which he will come " at an hour that he is not looked for, and will cut asunder the unfaithful servant, and will appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." He proclaimed it as that day, in which " the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness," in which it shall be " more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah," than for some of those to whom the Gospel shall have been preached ; in which he will say to many professors of Christianity, " I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity : " in which " his angels shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Did not the Apostles declare the same truths ? Did not they proclaim the same day, the day of Vengeance ; the day of the Lord, " which will come as a thief in the night ; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up : " the day " in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance of them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ? " Have not his ministers always proclaimed this day ? Are they not still commissioned to proclaim it ? Are they not still commissioned to declare that the Lord is a jealous God, a consuming fire, who will by no means clear

the guilty, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire?

Having thus endeavored to explain the two periods stated in the text, and to shew their respective meaning, I shall now proceed, in discharge of my office, to proclaim these truths to *you*, and to set before you your own deep and individual interest in them. With you, then, my brethren, it is now "the acceptable year of the Lord." It is the period of the Lord's mercy and long-suffering towards you; the season of His grace, the day of His salvation, in which he waiteth to be gracious, and maketh all his goodness to pass before you. The Gospel, that joyful trumpet of the jubilee, is now sounding in your ears, and proclaiming aloud the wondrous blessings, which it is employed to dispense. Let me remind you what these blessings are; deliverance from bondage, and restoration to your forfeited inheritance. Let me remind you how rich, how glorious these blessings are in themselves, how suitable, how seasonable, how necessary for you. The Gospel finds you (whether you will own it, whether you know it or not) in a state of spiritual bondage; the wretched slaves of sin and Satan; prisoners to the justice of God, shut up unto condemnation for the many sins which you have committed; and bound to appear before his judgment-seat, from which there lies no appeal, and at which no evasion will avail. But though the Gospel finds you in this state, it is not willing to leave you in it. It proffers to you deliverance. It proposes to set you free. It offers to break every yoke, and every chain, and to grant to you a full release from all the pains and penalties of sin. It proclaims to you in the name of the Almighty, the great God of heaven and earth, *Redemption*, through the blood of Jesus, even the remission of sins. Are not these joyful sounds? Are not these tidings of great joy? They would be so, if you really felt your bondage. They are so to those who really feel it. May the Spirit of God enlighten all our hearts to see and know our danger, that we may flee from the wrath to come! May He open all our ears to receive and welcome these glorious truths!

But hitherto I have stated only a part of these truths. It is a small thing with the God of all grace and goodness, whose mercy endureth for ever, to deliver you from the

Yondage of sin and death. He designs also to translate you into his own immediate presence, and to exalt you to the throne of His glory. The Gospel proposes, not only to save you from punishment, but to make you the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty ; to give to you a name and a place among his children ; to clothe you with the robe of righteousness ; to adorn you with the graces of His Spirit ; to make you meet for partaking the inheritance of His saints in light. In short, God offers to you His Son Jesus Christ : offers Him to be your Surety, Mediator, and Redeemer, your Prophet, Priest, and King : and *with Him* freely gives you all things ; all things necessary for life and godliness, for your present peace and for your everlasting happiness. He says to you, " This is my beloved Son ; hear ye *Him*," ' receive *Him* : believe in *Him* : rely on *Him* : give yourselves to *Him* : serve, obey, and love *Him* : and then I am reconciled unto you. I am at peace with you. I will be a Father unto you. " I will save you ; I will rejoice over you with joy ; I will rest in my love ! " I will cause all things to work together for your good. I will be myself your portion, and your exceeding great reward !

Such, my brethren, are the blessings, which as a minister of the Gospel I proclaim to you. I assure you, in the name of the Almighty, and on the authority of His word, that if ye be willing and obedient, all these blessings shall be yours. They are secured to you by two immutable things, the promise and the oath of God, who cannot lie. May I not hope that there are some, who thankfully receive these gracious truths ; who know the joyful sound ; and who, while they are listening with admiration and delight to the glad tidings of a salvation, so full, so free, so glorious, are humbly saying in their hearts to God ' Be it unto thy servant according to thy word ! Lord I believe ; help thou my unbelief. I thank Thee for thy unspeakable Gift. I desire to serve Thee with my spirit in the Gospel of thy Son. I accept Him as my Saviour, my Lord, and my King. I consecrate myself to his service and Glory : and I rely on thy promised Spirit to work in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.' May He who has put these words into your heart, bless you according to the full meaning of them !

May He inspire you with wisdom, courage, and strength to fight the good fight, and to lay hold on eternal life!

But on the other hand must I not fear that there are others present, to whom these tidings are tidings of no joy: who hear with indifference the proclamation of the Gospel; and care not whether the trumpet sound forth deliverance or not? Should I say, that I have no fears, I should greatly dissemble with you. When I know in how many ways mankind neglect or abuse this great Salvation, I cannot but strongly fear that some of you may be too justly chargeable with all the folly, and with all the guilt which such a conduct involves. Are you so closely occupied with worldly cares or worldly pleasures, as to have no time for serious thought and religious meditation? Or, are you so indisposed to spiritual and heavenly things, as to listen to the mention of them with impatience and disgust? Or, are you so lifted up with pride and self-conceit, that you will not own yourself a sinner, nor will humbly call on Christ for mercy? Or, having some convictions on your consciences, are you trifling with them, and deferring your repentance to a more convenient season? Or, professing yourself the servant of God, are you satisfied, like the Pharisees of old, with an outward form of Godliness, with the performance of some moral duties, with the mere observance of religious ceremonies; while you are inattentive to the state of the heart, are indulging evil thoughts, and lay not the axe to the root of the tree? Or, calling yourself a Christian, do you not depart from iniquity, but allow yourself in some known and habitual violation of the law of God, putting evil for good, and darkness for light? With all, with every one of you, whose heart pleads guilty to any one of these charges, I must be very plain. I must tell you, without any palliation or apology, that you are neglecting, or abusing the great Salvation of the Gospel. You are slighting "the acceptable year of the Lord." You are trifling with his grace and mercy, with his long-suffering and compassion. You are rejecting His gracious offers. You are refusing the Gift of His Son. And what think you, will be the consequences of such a conduct? What *must* they be? I have plainly set before you the Blessings of the Gospel; let me now as plainly remind you of the Terrors of the Lord. There will be "a day of vengeance of our God;" a day, in

which you will be called to account for this your heinous wickedness : a day, in which you will be speechless before your Judge : a day, in which, being convicted beyond all doubt of your desperate enmity and incorrigible hatred to the God of Love and Goodness, you will be condemned with all his other enemies to everlasting torments. Then the long-suffering of God, which you have here so long abused, will last no longer. His wrath will be poured out upon you to the uttermost : that wrath, in comparison with which the wrath poured out upon Jerusalem and upon Anti-Christ, will have been as nothing. It will be the day of *His Vengeance* ; of His Indignation ; of His Fury ; in which you will be driven with everlasting destruction from His presence, and from the power of His Glory. It will be the day, in which you will begin to know experimentally the meaning of those awful expressions “ the second Death ” — “ the outer darkness ” — “ the worm that never dieth ; and the fire which is never quenched. ” — My brethren, think not that I have any pleasure in denouncing these judgments. I denounce them with pain. But I must deliver my own Soul ; that in so doing I may possibly benefit yours. And if it give you pain to *hear* the mention of these awful threatenings ; what will it be to *feel* the reality of them ? O consider this, “ lest He pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. ” Consider how soon these threatenings may be turned into Realities. To-day is the accepted time, the Day of Salvation to you all. But to-morrow may be the day of vengeance to any of you. If you die this night, and die in your sins, it certainly will be so. “ O that you were wise ; that you understood this : that you would consider your latter end ! ” Let me once more beseech you to remember, that now is the acceptable year of the Lord. Now the Lord is knocking at the door of every heart among you, and praying for admission. Say not to Him “ Go thy way for this time, ” lest He cease to strive any more with you : lest He swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest.

SERMON XX.

Connection between the Confidence and Character of the
True Christian Stated and Illustrated.

ISAIAH, XXV. 9.

And it shall be said in that Day, lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for Him : we will be glad and rejoice in His Salvation.

THIS passage plainly admits, and even seems to require two distinct interpretations. The expression in *that day* may be understood as referring—either to the time of the first appearance of Christ in the flesh, and to the consequent publication of the Gospel at Jerusalem, when in “that mountain the Lord of Hosts made unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of the wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,”—or to that still more important period, the Day of the *second* appearing of our great God, and Saviour Jesus Christ in glory, “when He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off the earth.” In the former of these senses, the text represents the joyful sentiments, with which these pious believers, who were waiting for the consolation of Israel, welcomed the manifestation of Christ on earth. In the latter sense (the sense in which I propose to apply the passage) the words express these exulting acclamations, with which *the People of God will celebrate the second Advent of their Lord*, “when he shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” With longing eyes, with extended arms they will hail his glorious appearance. With one heart, with one voice they will break forth into these rapturous sounds, “Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him ; He will save us ; this is the Lord ; we have waited for Him ; we will be glad, and rejoice in His Salvation.”

Such "*in that day*," will be the triumphant Song of the Ransomed of the Lord. Such will be the exulting confidence, with which they will then lift up their heads. Who does not wish to bear a part in that triumphant song: Who does not wish with that exulting confidence, to lift up his head? But what will wishes the most fervent profit?—Would we, my brethren, realize these wishes; would we be partakers of the privileges of the Saints, we must be partakers of their character. Would we share in the joy and confidence, which they will feel, we must possess the same title to joy and confidence which they will then possess. Would we "*in that Day*" adopt their language, we must have the same ground for using it, which they will have. What that ground is, the language itself evidently shews. The persons are described as rejoicing in the assurance of their relation to Christ, of their interest in Him, and of the certainty of that Salvation, which He is bringing to them. "*This is our God*" "*He will save us*"—"We will be glad in His Salvation." But whence does this assurance spring? From a consciousness of their having waited for him. Twice they declare as the ground of their confidence in Christ, "*We have waited for Him.*" In the days of their flesh, they looked to Christ as their God, and Saviour. They lived in expectation of his glorious appearing. They made preparations against his second coming. Therefore it is that they now lift up their heads with joy. Therefore it is that they now are glad and rejoice in his Salvation.

In further discoursing on this passage, I shall proceed to illustrate two important Truths suggested by it:

I. That nothing will inspire us with joy, and confidence in the day of Judgment, but a real Interest in Jesus Christ.

II. That none will in that day have a real Interest in Jesus Christ, and consequently will rejoice in His Salvation, but those who are now waiting for his coming.

I. I am to shew that nothing will inspire us with joy and confidence in the Day of Judgment, but a real Interest in Jesus Christ. I might go further, and say, that nothing but a good hope of an interest in Christ can give us real, abiding, exalted enjoyment in this life. Whatever takes to itself the name of happiness where this hope is not included, has no just pretensions to the name. But on this

point, as not connected with the present subject, I shall not now insist. Let it be admitted that men, who are living without Christ in the world, yet possess some sources of present enjoyment. The pursuit, the management, and the success of their worldly affairs; the acquisition of wealth; the prosperity of their families; the possession of power; the gratification of their selfish, or sensual desires; the flattery and applause of their fellow-creatures; all these are things in which men find some pleasure in this life. Far indeed from having any hope of an Interest in Jesus Christ, He is not in all their thoughts. Yet they are not decidedly unhappy. They are at ease, and comparatively enjoy themselves. Wholly occupied with delights of an earthly, and a carnal nature, and knowing no better pleasures than such as this World can yield, they feel no need of Christ, nor deem Him necessary to their happiness. But will this be the case in the *Day of Judgment*? Will they "in that Day" lift up their heads with joy? Will any of those things in which they have here placed their happiness, then afford them any pleasure; When they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power, and great glory; when they shall hear the sound of that awful trumpet, which shall awake the dead; when they shall perceive the earth passing away from beneath their feet, the Heavens departing like a scroll, and the elements melting with fervent heat, will they experience any delight in reflecting on the wealth which they amassed, on the power they possessed, on the applause which they gained, on the pleasures which they enjoyed during the short period of their lives? Will they then rejoice in thinking how greatly they raised their families; how successfully they managed their affairs; how pleasantly they passed their days? Alas! Such thoughts, such reflections will then yield them no delight. All these enjoyments will have ceased for ever. One grand, one important, one interesting idea alone will then fill the mind: One subject infinitely momentous will then press with invincible force upon the thoughts. 'The solemn Day of account is come. How shall I abide it? Are my Sins pardoned? Am I at peace with God? Without an assurance of forgiveness, and reconciliation how shall I lift up my guilty head? How shall I endure the presence of my heart-searching Judge?' But whence, my brethren, can this as-

gurance be obtained? It can be obtained only from an Interest in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ alone is pardon for the Sinner. In Jesus Christ alone, through his blood and righteousness, is God a merciful God. By faith only in Jesus Christ, can an interest in his blood, and righteousness be procured. These are truths, which are now frequently denied, derided, or virtually rejected even by those who make some profession of religion. Even such persons have oftentimes low thoughts of Jesus Christ. They see not his value nor his Glory. They feel not their sins, nor their need of Him. Puffed up with pride, and darkened in their foolish minds, they make to themselves Saviours. They think to atone for their sins by their charities. They think that their virtues will over-balance their vices. They depend for acceptance with God, on their own fancied merits, on the usefulness of their lives, on the sweetness of their tempers, on their outward performance of religious duties. They flatter themselves that they shall be saved, because they have not run into the same excesses with many others, whom they see around them; or because, if they have been guilty of some violations of God's Law, yet their hearts are good at the bottom. On these grounds, or on such as these, men now promise to themselves safety, and trust that in the Day of Judgment they shall lift up their heads, without shame or terror. But when the Day of Judgment actually comes, how will they then feel? Then these delusions will continue no longer. Then the veil of self-conceit will be torn from their eyes. The truths, which they have here refused to see, will flash upon their consciences with irresistible conviction. The emptiness, of their ungodly hopes, the vanity of those false foundations, on which they have here relied, will then be clearly unfolded to them. Then will they distinctly see, what they never could see before, that "Christ is all, in all"—that "there is Salvation in no other,"—and that an Interest in Him is worth ten thousand worlds.—'Had we this interest in Him,' they will then cry, with what confidence might we now have stood before Him! Assured of our acceptance in this glorious Saviour, with what joy might we now have lift up our heads! Washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, instead of trembling at His presence, and dreading His approach, instead of being overwhelmed with unspeakable hor-

ror at His glorious appearing, we might now have hailed His coming with Songs of triumph, and have rejoiced in Him as our Redeemer and Deliverer ! —Thus, “in that day,” will the impenitent and the unbelieving be compelled to bear testimony to the truth before us. Thus will they reluctantly unite their voices in declaring, that nothing can inspire us with joy, and confidence, in the Day of Judgment, but a real Interest in Jesus Christ. I proceed then to shew,

II. That none will in that Day have a real Interest in Jesus Christ, and consequently will rejoice in His Salvation, but those who are now waiting for His coming.

This expression of *waiting for Christ*, or other expressions of a like meaning, are frequently used in the New Testament, as descriptive of the character of Christians. They are said “to *wait for* the Son from Heaven :” to be *looking for* the glorious appearing of their God and Saviour ;” to be “*waiting the coming of* the Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus our Saviour directs His Disciples to be “like unto men that *wait for their Lord*.” And in like manner we find the Saints in the text representing their conduct towards the Lord in the days of their flesh, by the same term, “we *have waited for Him*.”—It may be useful then to point out some of the particulars implied in this general description of the Christian Character.

1st. To “wait for Christ,” implies a *firm belief* of His Second Coming, and of the infinitely momentous consequences which will follow that event. The true Christian is one, who “walks by faith, and not by sight.” He receives with implicit submission and belief, whatever he finds revealed in the word of God. Hence he really believes, that “Christ will come to be our Judge.” While some are profanely asking, “where is the promise of His coming ?” he lays it down in his mind as an infallible truth, that “the day of the Lord *will* come.” He entertains no more doubt, that at the appointed hour, “the Lord Jesus will be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on His Enemies,” than if the awful hour were already arrived. Faith leads him to overlook the time and space which intervene, and to contemplate the future as actually present. But true Faith has another property. It not only realizes unseen things, and makes distant events to become near ;

but it operates effectually in the heart. It is a working, an active, a holy principle. It sets a man to seek, and to avoid the objects which it reveals; and to make provision against those events, which it believes to be coming. Hence,

2dly. To "wait for Christ," implies not only a firm belief of His Second Coming, but a *constant endeavor* to be *prepared* for that event. The Servant who *waits* for his Lord, not only expects that He *will* come, but strives to be *ready* for His coming. The wise virgins, who waited for the return of the bridegroom, took oil, not only in their lamps, but also in their vessels; that at whatever hour he should come, they might be ready to enter in with him to the Marriage feast. Thus, those in the text, who are described as saying, "Lo, this is our God, we have *waited* for Him," are represented by that expression as intimating, that while they were on earth, they lived in a state of *Preparation* for Christ's Second Coming. Let us then enquire what this state of preparation is. Who are they that are now *prepared* for the Coming of Christ to Judgment? They are those who are now living by faith in Him: those, who, conscious of their own guilt and weakness, are now trusting to Him for pardon and strength. The true Christian is one, (my Brethren, attend to the description,) the true Christian is One, who, though in his heart he has renounced, and in his life has forsaken the ways of sin, yet still feels himself to be a Sinner; still finds, that he does many things which he ought not to do, and leaves undone many things, which he ought to do; and has no health in him: One, therefore, who, adopting the Publican's confession and prayer, cries, "God be merciful to me a Sinner;" while at the same time he daily comes to the blood of Jesus for the cleansing of his Soul, and for the purging of his conscience from dead works to serve the living God. He is One, whose hope, and peace, and joy, are placed in Christ alone. Through Christ alone he draws near with comfort, and confidence to the throne of mercy. On Christ alone he depends for grace to make his heart good and holy, and to enable him to overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh. For this grace he daily prays; and strives to increase, and improve it in the use of all the appointed means. Such is the true Christian. Such is the man, who, "living the life

he now lives in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God ;" is prepared for the coming of Christ, and thus waits for Him. But

Sadly. Under this general expression of waiting for Christ another particular is also included. It implies a *patient continuance in well doing*. The true Disciples of Christ not only believe that He will come, and prepare themselves for his coming, but they also *patiently* wait the time of his coming. They do not murmur and repine at the services imposed on them, or at the trials which they are called to endure. They are not impatient at bearing (if such be the Lord's will respecting them) the burden and heat of the day. They are perhaps laboring under pain and sickness. They are involved in difficulties. Their conduct, it may be, is falsely represented. Their reputation is injured. These are evils which they cannot but deeply feel, and would gladly avoid. They naturally wish for an end to their trials : but they still submit themselves to the will of Christ, and leave both the time, and the manner of deliverance to his power and wisdom. They remember how long the Lord waited for their repentance ; and shall they now refuse to tarry the Lord's leisure ? Shall they think it long to wait for Christ, who waited so long for them ? No. " Thy Will," they cry, " be done ; not ours." 'Thou wilt appear for us, at the time, and in the way, which Thou knowest to be best. We leave ourselves in thy hands. Do with us what is good in thy sight. We wait patiently for the Lord. We will wait upon Him, and he shall renew our strength.'

It may be seen then on the whole, what is the character of true Christians. They assuredly believe that Christ will come to be their Judge. In that belief they now prepare for his coming ; and without impatience faithfully endure unto the end. These are the persons who are now *waiting* for Christ. And these it is evident are the only persons who will have a real Interest in Him, at his appearing. For they are the only persons, who really know Him ; who really belong to Him ; who really believe in Him ; who really serve, obey, and honor Him. These therefore are the only persons who can have joy and confidence at his coming. These are the only persons, who will be enabled to adopt the language of the Text, and say, " Lo thou

is our God : we have waited for him ; and he will save us. This is the Lord : we have waited for him : we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation." As for all other persons, they must be filled with shame and terror at his coming : for they will know, that he is not *their* God. They waited not for him on earth. They never seriously believed that he would come to be their judge. They never made any real preparation for his coming. They loved the world. They obeyed their lusts. They indulged in sin. They accounted themselves righteous. They valued not Christ. They sought not an interest in his blood, to wash their guilty souls. They prayed not for his grace, to cleanse their impure hearts. He was not in all their thoughts, to any real and effectual purpose. And how then will they endure his presence ? What confidence will they have at his appearing ? Will they be glad, and rejoice in his salvation ? It will be impossible. They must be overwhelmed with confusion. They must stand speechless before him. They must long, but long in vain, for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them, and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

O then my brethren, are *you* waiting for Christ ? Are *you* now waiting for him ? Do you believe that he will come, and that you must stand before him ? Are you endeavoring to be prepared for his coming ? Should he now come, even while I am speaking, in what state would he find you ? Could you humbly, but confidently appeal to him, as your God, and Saviour ; as the God whom *you* worship : as the Saviour in whom *you* trust ? Could *you* say to him, who searcheth the heart, "we have waited for Thee?" If on putting these questions to yourselves, your heart now condemns you, O consider your state. Consider it *now*, while there is time. Make your calling and election sure, while *you* have opportunity allowed. Seek to become acquainted with Jesus Christ. You hear of him continually ; be not content with hearing of him. Seek to know him. You will one day see him. Let him not in that day be a stranger to you. Get such a knowledge of him *now* ; such a real, spiritual, experimental knowledge of him, that then you may welcome him with joy. Remember that he is nigh unto all that call upon him. If you seek him with all your heart, you shall assuredly find him. "Behold," he cries,

"I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." My brethren, hear his voice. Open the door to him, who so mercifully asks to be admitted. Shut not your ears, your heart against your God and King. He, who will shortly come to be your Judge, now waits to be your Saviour. If you continue unbelieving and impenitent, he will be constrained at his appearing to drive you for ever from his presence. If you now repent, and believe, he will in that day, behold you with delight, and you shall see his face with joy. May the Lord prepare you for this solemn meeting ; May he "direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ !"

And you, who are waiting for him ;—You, who with the Apostle Paul, "know whom you have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed unto him against that Day—be not ye weary in well-doing. Be not moved away from that persuasion, and from the blessed hope which it inspires. Hold fast your confidence firm unto the end. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Try to know him more. Acquaint yourselves more with him. Seek to have more experience of his power, and influence in your heart. Live daily in communion with him. So constantly realize his presence, his love and favor with you, that when he shall appear, you may indeed know him, as your God, and Saviour, and be glad, and rejoice in his Salvation !

SERMON XXI.

Evil of Calumny and Prejudice Exposed:

ACTS, xvii. part 6; and 7.

These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also : whom Jason hath received ; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, that there is another King, one Jesus.

IN the beginning of this chapter, we find that Paul and Silas, in the course of their ministry, came to Thessalonica, a considerable city, in which was a synagogue of the Jews. Here Paul, as his manner was, preached the Gospel on the Sabbath-days, reasoning out of the Scriptures, and proving that Jesus was Christ. Nor was his labor in vain in the Lord. For we read, that "some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas ; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."—But this success brought with it its usual attendant, persecution : which began here, as it had begun in most other places, with those inveterate enemies of Christianity, the unbelieving Jews. "For moved with envy," not enduring the thought that the Gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, even though they rejected it themselves, they "took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason," where the Apostles lodged, "and sought to bring them out to the people." But being disappointed in their hope of finding them there, they "drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city," and then clamorously urged the Charge stated in the text, "These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also : whom Jason has received ; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, that there is another King, one Jesus."

VOL. II.

26

It is this Charge, which I purpose to make the subject of my present discourse ; and to this end I shall lead you to consider it in reference,

I. To the Persons, against whom it was originally preferred : and

II. To the Views, in which it may now be profitably contemplated by us.

I. The Charge in the text, when considered in reference to the persons against whom it was originally preferred, consisted of two parts ; both containing accusations of a very serious nature, and such as were calculated to render those who were the objects of them, odious to the people, and obnoxious to the magistrates. The first part was directed against Paul and Silas in particular ; the second against the Christians in general.

Let us separately consider these two parts of the Charge, and enquire into the truth and justice with which they were respectively urged.

First then, the accusation brought against Paul and Silas, was contained in these words : " These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also." Now it cannot be denied that there was a sense, in which this Charge might with some plausibility have been shown to be true. These Apostles had for some time been the preachers of a doctrine, the avowed and actual tendency of which, was to produce a moral change in the world ; to bring about a great revolution in the hearts and lives of mankind. The aim and design of their ministry had been to promote the Kingdom of Christ : to draw off men's affections from the things of this world, and to direct them to heavenly objects, to lead them to deny and mortify those corrupt inclinations, desires, and passions, under the influence of which they had hitherto lived, and to implant and strengthen in them new and holy principles, which might be productive of a suitable improvement in their lives. This was the object which Paul and Silas had hitherto been laboring to promote in the different places, where they had exercised their ministry : and in this sense it might perhaps be said, so far as their object had been attained, that they "*had turned the world upside down.*"—But this was not the sense in which their accusers made the Charge. They obviously did not allude to any change of this kind ; to any moral reformation which had

been effected. It was evidently their intention in charging the Apostles with "having turned the world upside down," to represent them as the enemies of civil and social order; the abettors and promoters of confusion, insubordination, and anarchy. It was evidently intended to represent them as persons, whose principles and practices were directly opposed to the peace and happiness of society: as persons, who had made it their business to wage war with the established rights and liberties of mankind; who had too successfully carried their point in other places; and were now come to Thessalonica for the purpose of prosecuting the same mischievous design.—Such was the substance and meaning of the Charge. But where was the foundation for it? With what truth and justice was it urged? By what proofs was it substantiated? What facts were adduced in support of it?

If we look at the account of St. Paul's previous ministry, we shall find nothing to countenance such an accusation. At Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, neither his conduct, nor his doctrine had been such, as to give the slightest ground for the Charge now brought against him. It was true indeed, that at the neighboring city of Philippi, both he, and Silas, on an accusation of the same nature with that in the text, had been beaten with stripes and cast into prison. But what had been the result? The magistrates, convinced of the injustice of the proceedings, had themselves come to the prison, and had "besought the Apostles, and brought them out." And as to their conduct at Thessalonica itself, we are incidentally furnished with very decisive proofs of the utter groundlessness of the Charge in the text. The following extracts from the two Epistles, which St. Paul shortly after sent to the Church in that city, evidently shew, how totally different, during his residence there, had been the tendency of his preaching and practice, from that, which it was now attempted to impute to him. "We beseech you, brethren, that ye study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands (as we commanded you) that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without."* "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly,

* 1 Thess. iv. 10, 11, 12.

*and not after the tradition which ye received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us : for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nought : but wrought with labor and travel night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample, that you may follow us. For when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."**—Surely commands and exhortations of this nature, were not the language of one, who was endeavoring to introduce confusion and disorder : while the *manner*, in which the Apostle here refers to the instructions which he had given, and to the example, which he had himself set, while living at Thessalonica, furnishes additional proof, (if additional proof were wanting) how void of foundation, how destitute of truth and justice was the Charge brought against him of "turning the world upside down."—Let us proceed then,

Secondly, to the other part of the accusation in the text, which was directed against the Christians in general. This part was comprehended in the following words, "These all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus." As the first part of the Charge was calculated to represent the Apostles as promoters of anarchy and confusion ; so this second was designed to represent their followers as enemies to the state, disloyal to the Roman Emperor, and rebels to his authority. For this is evidently the crime which it was intended to fix on them. "They say that there is another king, one Jesus." 'Another King, in whose service they are engaged ; under whose banner they are enlisted ; to whom they have vowed allegiance and submission. And how then, it was insinuated, can they be true subjects of the Emperor ? Where is their fidelity to him ? Where is their obedience to his decrees, which forbid any rival in the throne, and require universal submission to his authority ? Disaffected to his government, attack-

* 2 Thess. iii. 6-12.

ed to another sovereign, they are ripe for insurrection and revolt; and if not checked by the strong arm of the civil power, they will in time overthrow the constituted authorities, and subvert the empire !

But where, (it may again be asked) was the foundation for this Charge ? With what truth and justice was it urged ? The Christians, indeed, acknowledged Jesus as their King. But His Kingdom was not of this world. Their obedience to Him did not interfere with their obedience in all lawful things to human authorities. Their allegiance to Him did not involve disloyalty to the Emperor. On the contrary, the precepts and principles of the Religion to which they had been converted, were calculated to make them better subjects than they had before been. Their divine Master had Himself expressly commanded them to "Render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's." And what did His Apostles enjoin ? What did St. Paul himself constantly enjoin in reference to this subject ? "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities, and powers, to obey magistrates." "Let every one be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet, and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty."* What color of probability was there that the followers of a Religion which enjoined on them such precepts as these should be notorious for their disloyal and seditious spirit ? And what did facts prove ? What had their conduct been ? In all the places in which the Gospel had hitherto been preached, we find no instance among those who had embraced it, of any rebellion against the constituted authorities, or of disobedience to any lawful command. What had been the case at Thessalonica ? Had the Christians so conducted themselves as to give any ground for the Charge, that they "did contrary to the decrees of Cesar ?" Nothing of this kind is mentioned. It is true, indeed, that at this very moment there was a great commotion in the place, and all the city was in an uproar ; but who were the authors of this tumult ? Not

* Titus, iii. 1. Rom. xiii. 1, 2. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

the Christians, but their accusers ; not Jason and the brethren, but the Jews and their agents : who, having assaulted and dragged them before the Rulers, were now accusing them as disturbers of the public peace, and enemies to the government. Surely nothing more need be added to shew the groundless nature of the Charge, or the injustice and malignity with which it was urged.

From this consideration then of the Charge in reference to the Persons against whom it was originally preferred, let us proceed to consider it in reference,

II. To the Views in which it may now be profitably contemplated by us.

There are several Views in which the subject before us might be contemplated with advantage : but I shall select only two.

1st. We may consider the Charge in the text as exhibiting a specimen of that calumnious treatment which true Religion in the persons of its ministers and its followers has often encountered from an unbelieving and irreligious world. Thessalonica has not been the only place, in which unjust accusations have been preferred against the servants and subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul and Silas have not been the only Preachers of the Gospel, who have been falsely represented as Movers of Sedition, and Enemies to the Public Peace. Jason and the Brethren with him have not been the only Christians, who have been slanderously accused of Disloyalty and Opposition to constituted authorities. In fact it is this Charge which has been the chief Instrument of Persecution in every age of the church. It is this Charge which has been often made the plausible pretence for seizing and slaughtering the servants of the Lord, both by Pagan and Papal Rome. This has been generally the cry against them, "they turn the world upside down : they serve another King." Nor has the cry yet ceased, even in modern times, and in Protestant Countries. Blessed be God ! in these countries the monster Persecution now is chained. He can no longer riot in the blood of the Saints. He can no longer drag them before Rulers, and by false accusations can immure them in Prisons, or afflict them with stripes. But though chained, he is not dead. He still lives ; and in nature and in spirit is unchanged. The original enmity between the seed of the Serpent, and

the seed of the Woman, is still the same as it ever was. The unbelieving world has no more affection for true Christianity and for its real followers, than it ever had. It still dislikes them, and seeks their ruin. The violence, indeed, of its operations, is limited, but their tendency is the same. The world, no longer permitted to lift its arm against the objects of its dislike, still raises its voice against them; and betrays, by the venom of the tongue, the malignant feelings of the heart. No longer able to wound the Person of its adversaries, it still tries to wound their character. It still brands them as Enemies to Society, and the Favorers of Sedition. It still charges them (but where is the Truth and Justice of the charge,) with "turning the world upside down, and with doing contrary to the decrees of Cesar.

Nor is this statement mere declamation, or bare assertion. It is too strongly substantiated by Facts. It is too clearly proved by Experience. My brethren, are not you yourselves witnesses to the truth of what I am saying? Have you not heard charges of this kind brought against the Ministers and Professors of Religion? How often are the Preachers of Evangelical Truth, represented as the enemies of mankind for insisting on the importance and necessity of vital Faith, and for asserting its sole and exclusive operation in the office of justifying the Sinner? For maintaining, in its purity, this fundamental Doctrine of the Gospel, how often are they charged with undermining the basis of social order, and with opening the door to immorality and licentiousness? Do they preach the necessity of a spiritual Regeneration? Do they declare it to be the Doctrine of Scripture, that except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God; that except he be converted, and experience such a real and radical change, as shall make him a new creature, he cannot serve and worship God in spirit and in truth? How frequently are the Preachers of the Gospel, for insisting on these points of prime importance, charged with promoting Enthusiasm, and Delusion, and Fanaticism, and all the evils which follow in their train?—Look next at private, individual Christians. Do they meet with a better treatment? Turned from the error of a sinful course, and walking by Faith in the Son of God, how often are they charged with being hostile to the welfare and order of Society! Refusing to join with the world in its ir-

religious pleasures; or to conform to its sinful practices; how often are they represented as disturbers of the public peace, and are accused of some secret, mischievous designs against the comfort and happiness of mankind ! What in our own days has been the clamor so industriously raised, what has been the charge so repeatedly urged against many of those who, from a sense of duty, and from love to God and man, are actively and zealously employed in dispersing the Scriptures through the means of the Bible Society, but that they are plotting the ruin both of Church and State, and are secretly preparing a mine, which, when exploded, will overwhelm in one common destruction, whatever is dear or valuable, or sacred in our civil or ecclesiastical establishments ? But in this charge, as well as in the others, which have been mentioned, where are the proofs by which they are supported ? Would that the persons, who thus lavishly deal in accusations, might be taught by the Text to recollect, that clamor does not supply the place of evidence, and that assertions are not the substitutes for facts ! Would that they might be led to consider, that in thus alandrously imputing, to the minister or to the professor of religion, motives and consequences, with which he is not chargeable, they are only repeating the disgraceful transaction at Thessalonica, and are imitating the persecuting spirit of those envious Jews : in respect of whom, let it be remembered, St. Paul has left this awful declaration upon record ; “ and they please not God, and are contrary to all men ! ”—Nor are you, my brethren, who may be unjustly suffering for conscience sake, unconcerned in these remarks. Are you evil spoken of ? Are you falsely accused ? Are you charged with crimes, or with criminal intentions, which you know to be groundless ? Be not surprised, as though some strange thing had happened unto you. You are only encountering the same afflictions, which are accomplished in your brethren, who are, or who have been, in the world. As the servants of Jesus Christ, you are called to go through evil report and good report. Bear in mind that if you were of the world, the world would not hate you ; and thus from its very hatred you may derive to yourself a source of inward peace and joy. Beware especially of two dangers, to which you are chiefly exposed. On the one hand, be not deterred by clamor and calumny from a faithful and conscientious discharge of your duty. On the

other hand, see that you give no just occasion for the accusations laid to your charge. Courage and circumspection, united with a spirit of meekness and patience, are the christian virtues, of which, under these circumstances, you have the greatest need. Pray then earnestly for these. Pray that they may be strengthened in your soul. And may the Lord enable you to endure and to overcome for his mercy's sake!

2d. We may consider the Charge in the Text as exhibiting an illustration of the nature and effects of Prejudice. The mind of man is never in a state more hurtful to itself, more injurious to others, or more obnoxious to the general cause of truth, than when under this baneful influence. Such was the case with the Jews at Thessalonica; and we have seen into what falsehood and injustice, into what violence and persecution they were carried away. It may be said perhaps in extenuation of their conduct, that they did not invent these accusations against Paul and the Christians in general: that they had heard of like accusations against them at other places, that they only repeated the charge, as they had heard it; and really, however ignorantly, believed it to be true. This point shall be readily granted. We will not attempt to criminate these Jews beyond their desert. It shall be readily granted, that they did really believe the charge which they preferred; they did really believe that Paul and Silas *had* turned the world upside down, and that the Christians in general *did* act contrary to the decrees of Cesar.—But what *ground* had they for this belief? On what *facts* did it rest? By what *proofs* was it supported? What *pains* had they taken to examine the evidences, or to inquire into the truth of the reports which had reached them? Observe the inconsistency and perverseness of their minds. They were giving implicit credit to rumors, which the slightest examination would have shewn them to have been false, while at the same time they were rejecting the Gospel, though confirmed and established by evidence the most decisive in itself, level to their understanding, and even forcibly thrust on their notice. How can we account for such inconsistent and unreasonable conduct? By a very plain and obvious solution. They inwardly hated the Doctrine of the Gospel, and the Apostles for preaching it. Hence as they were previously determined

not to believe the Gospel, nor consequently to pay any attention to the evidence in its favor, so they were previously disposed to believe every thing evil of the Apostles and their followers ; nay even ready and glad to credit any report to their disadvantage. Surely there cannot be a more apposite and striking illustration of the odious nature and evil effects of Prejudice ; of the way, in which this most destructive malady, when once it is allowed to take possession of the mind, diffuses its poisonous and fatal influence throughout every faculty ; closes the ears ; shuts the eyes ; perverts the reasoning powers ; and debases the moral and intellectual part of man. Would that those persons among us, who are so ready to hear, to believe, and to propagate charges and accusations against the more serious followers of religion, may see, reflected in this glass, their own deformity ; and in time be admonished of their sin and danger ! Instead of crediting every report, and believing every assertion, which tends to criminate the motives or the practices of those from whom they differ, may they learn with candor and impartiality to investigate the *truth* of such reports, and carefully and accurately to examine the *ground* of such assertions ! If they act otherwise, have they not reason to fear, that their enmity to the preachers, and to the professors of Evangelical Truth, results, however unconsciously, from a latent enmity to the Truth itself ; that their hostility to the persons, and to the means employed in dispersing the Scriptures, springs from a rooted, however unsuspected, hostility to the Scriptures themselves ?

In the passage following the Text there is an instance of conduct so expressly opposite to that which we have been considering, and so obviously designed as a contrast to it, that we could not properly close our present subject without adverting to it. The conduct in question was that of the Jews at Berea, to whom St. Paul bears this decisive and honorable testimony, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so : therefore many of them believed." Observe the several particulars here mentioned in their favor. "They received the word with all readiness of mind ;" with a disposition humble and teachable, desirous of knowing the truth, and ready to admit it. They were not pre-

misled on by previous rumors to think disadvantageously of the Apostles and of their doctrine. They were not set against them by the late clamor and tumult at Thessalonica, of which they probably could not be ignorant. They were determined to examine and to judge for themselves. "They searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." They listened with attention to the facts related, to the doctrines taught, to the explanation given by the preachers of the Gospel : and then with patience and diligence enquired into the proofs, and weighed the evidences, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Here was candor. Here was impartiality. Here, as the Apostle observes, was true nobility of mind, the very reverse of that dishonorable and debasing disposition, which had characterized their brethren at Thessalonica. Here also was the fruit of such ingenuous conduct. "Therefore many of them believed." Truth, so followed, could not but be obtained. And thus, in the Jews of Berea, on the one hand, embracing the Gospel, and admitted to all the blessings and privileges of the Christian covenant, and in those of Thessalonica on the other hand, virulently opposing the truth, and shutting themselves out of the kingdom of God, we are forcibly reminded of the difference to which a prejudiced or an unprejudiced mind tends ultimately to lead those in whom the one or the other respectively prevails. My brethren flee from Prejudice. Watch and guard against it. Oppose and resist its power in your heart. Above all things pray to the Holy Spirit of God to dwell within you. "For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty." His grace is the only effectual remedy for all the sinful disorders of our corrupted nature. May He deliver you from all blindness of heart ; from pride and envy ; from hatred and malice, and from all uncharitableness !

SERMON XXII.

Converting Mercy a pledge of Persevering Grace.

ROMANS, V. 10.

For if when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life.

IT is of prime importance to true Christians to have "a good Hope through grace." Such a Hope—a Hope of at last triumphing over every obstacle, and of being made more than conquerors through Him, who has loved them—not only lies at the bottom of their peace and comfort, but is absolutely necessary to their usefulness and activity as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Hence Hope is sometimes called the "Helmet of Salvation," which covers and protects the head in the day of battle.

But the more truly any man is a Christian, the more sensible he is of the dangers and enemies which surround him; and consequently the more need there is of his Hope being strengthened and confirmed. On which account we may suppose it is, that the Scriptures furnish so many grounds for a *strong consolation* to all those who have fled for refuge to the Hope of the Gospel. Sometimes the most encouraging *Declarations* of support and protection are vouchsafed: at other times the most direct and animating *Promises* of victory are given: While not seldom a strong appeal is made to our own understanding; and the Spirit of God graciously condescends to *reason* with his people on the groundlessness of their fears, and on the unshaken confidence with which they may rely on his watchful and protecting care to keep them unto the end.

Such are the nature and tendency of the passage which I have chosen for the text, The whole scope of the argument in several foregoing verses had been to prove, that the Hope of the true Christian is one which "maketh not ashamed;" which will not leave him destitute of support,

nor consequently ashamed of his confidence in that day, when its reality and soundness will be most eminently put to the proof. The Text contains the sum and conclusion of the preceding statement ; and is admirably calculated to give to every true Believer in Christ the strongest assurance, which reasoning can give, that notwithstanding all opposing and intervening obstacles, he shall certainly in the end attain to that " Salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." " For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life ?" In these words the Apostle assumes it as a position already proved and granted, that true Christians have experienced in God's past dealings with them, a most wonderful instance of his loving-kindness and mercy : " when they were enemies, they were reconciled to God by the death of His Son ;" and from this position he strongly infers their future preservation and final victory. " Much more being reconciled, they shall be saved by his life." In discoursing then further on this passage, I shall use this division of it, and shall proceed to consider and illustrate

I. The Position here assumed.

II. The Inference drawn from it.

I. The Position we have seen is this, That true Christians, in God's past dealings with them, have experienced a most wonderful exercise of His loving-kindness and mercy. And in what has this exercise consisted ? In the great and glorious Change which they have undergone as to their state and condition, and in the astonishing Way in which this change has been effected. Let us separately advert to these two particulars.

The Change alluded to is thus described : " They were enemies," but they are " now reconciled to God." There was a time, when they were *enemies* to God ; in a state of variance with Him, and of rebellion against Him : when there was no peace, no agreement between them and God. This, indeed, is naturally the state of all men. Whether Jews or Gentiles, whether the professed worshippers of God, or Heathens and Idolators, they are by nature enemies to God ; for by nature they are sinners. They are descended from a stock originally tainted, and share in the transgression and guilt of their first parents. " Being by na-

ture born in sin, they are children of wrath." It is not however *thus*, by imputation only, by descent alone, that they are sinners. They are personally and practically sinners. They are "enemies to God by wicked works." All men "have gone astray, every one to his own way." In their hearts they have no love of God : no desire after Him : no wish to please and serve Him. On the contrary, whatever they *do* know rightly of God, they dislike. They dislike His holiness. They dislike His law. They dislike His service. And the necessary consequence of such a state of heart, is opposition and enmity to Him in the life. They live after the flesh. They fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Numbers run into open and gross violations of the divine law. They sin with greediness, and cast off every restraint. But *all* in some way betray their natural enmity to God and his holy will. In some way they serve sin, and obey it in the lusts thereof. They walk after the course of this world. They place their happiness in the creature and not in the Creator. They lay up treasures on earth. They seek to have their portion, their good things here. In short, they live habitually under the influence of that "carnal mind," of which it is expressly said, that it is "enmity against God."—But of such a state, a state of so much sin and guilt, how great must be the misery and the danger ! To dislike God, who is goodness ; to hate His service, which is happiness ; to have lost His favor, which is better than life ; to be exposed to His wrath, which is a consuming fire ; who can conceive the real wretchedness of such a state ! Such however is the state of all men naturally. Such was once the state of those, who are now real Christians. But it is their state no longer. They were once enemies to God, but they are enemies no longer. They are now "reconciled to God." His wrath is turned away from them. Their guilt is blotted out. Their sins are so put away, as never more to be mentioned or even remembered against them. They are brought into a most blessed state of peace and friendship with God. He is become their God, and they are become his people. They are privileged to approach Him. They are emboldened to call Him, Father.

Nor is this *all* the Change which has taken place. They have been renewed in the spirit of their minds. Their na-

ture has undergone a most wonderful alteration. They are become new creatures, in principle and practice, in dispositions and affections, in desires and pursuits, in heart and life. They now love God ; they delight in his ordinances ; they find pleasure in his ways ; and count it their joy to walk in his statutes, to keep his judgments and do them. They now esteem His service to be perfect freedom. They look back with shame and sorrow on their former alienation of heart and life from His holy will and ways : and it is their earnest desire, and prevailing resolution, henceforth to “yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as Instruments of righteousness unto God.”—Such is the great and glorious Change which has taken place in their state and condition. From enemies they have been made friends ; from rebels, children ; from vessels of wrath, monuments of grace and mercy.

Let us next advert to the astonishing Way in which this Change has been effected. True Christians have been reconciled to God. But by what means ? “By the death of His Son.”—Under what circumstances ? “When they were enemies.” If the representation given above has in some degree shown the nature and importance of the Change which has taken place, the statement to be now made, will no less clearly show the surprising loving-kindness and mercy by which it has been accomplished.

It is plain that the whole Benefit of this Reconciliation rests with man. God cannot be profited by it. Perfectly blessed and glorious in Himself, He would still have ever continued so, though men had ever continued enemies to Him. They are the persons who gain by this reconciliation : but let us observe that it was God who brought it about. In His infinite mercy He projected so great a blessing to mankind. In His infinite wisdom He devised a plan for effecting it. And when, according to this plan, it was expedient, that His only-begotten Son should be made man, should suffer for sinners, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, He “spared Him not, but delivered Him up for us all.” He delivered Him up as a sacrifice to his own immutable Justice and Holiness ; that hence it might most illustriously appear, how immense was the guilt of man’s apostacy, which stood in need of such a satisfaction ; and how unsearchable were the riches of divine

pity and love, which withheld it not.—And under what *circumstances* was this satisfaction offered; this provision made for reconciling sinners unto God? “*When they were enemies to Him:*” while they were still in that state of enmity and guilt. Previously to any disposition on their part to turn to God, and to seek reconciliation with Him; previously to any sorrow felt, any contrition expressed, any desire of forgiveness manifested, any petition for mercy offered, God had thoughts of mercy towards them; planned their return to Him; and provided the way. In fact a disposition to turn to Him, a desire for reconciliation, a godly sorrow for sin, an humble cry for mercy, are themselves a part of that very salvation, which He designed and prepared for men. The gift and communication of his Spirit to produce in them a change of heart, to subdue their natural enmity to Him, to work in them repentance and faith, to infuse into them holy affections and spiritual desires, was absolutely necessary for the completion of His gracious purpose; yea, so necessary, that without this Gift his purpose of reconciling them to Himself must have utterly failed. Here then we see the abounding love of God to his people. He pitied them, when enemies. He planned their reconciliation to Himself, when they were yet rebels to His law and government. He gave His Son for them, while they were ungodly and without strength. “God (says the Apostle,) commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

These remarks may serve to illustrate the Position assumed by the Apostle in the Text. I proceed to consider.

II. The inference which he deduces from it. “Much more being reconciled, they shall be saved by his life.” From God’s previous dealings with His people; from the wonderful Loving-kindness and Mercy, which He has already shewn to them, St. Paul strongly infers their future preservation and final victory. “Much more they shall be saved:” much more, they shall be kept unto Salvation; and being enabled to endure, shall assuredly in the end attain everlasting life. Their confidence in the Lord’s power, faithfulness, and love, inspired by His previous mercies to them, shall not be disappointed.

With this view the whole scheme of Evangelical Doctrine agrees. True Christians in their reconciliation with God,

have, indeed, undergone a great and a glorious Change. But the work is not yet complete. Much has been done, but something still remains, and so long as they are in the body, will still remain, to be done. The great obstacle to their everlasting happiness is removed. They are at peace with God. Their sins are pardoned, and their souls are renewed. But they are as yet renewed only in *part*. The carnal mind, that natural enemy to God and Holiness, though weakened, is not utterly subdued. It still lurks within, and struggles hard to recover its lost dominion in the soul. Their great adversary, the devil, also no less constantly assaults and harasses them; and strives by force and subtlety to regain his power over them: while the world assails them with all its formidable weapons; with its promises allures; with its threatening terrifies; with its snares entangles them. Now the natural tendency of all these united obstacles is to oppose their progress; to stop their Christian career; nay, to drive them back; to undo what has been done; to reduce them to their former state of guilt and misery; and thus, if possible, to make their hope ashamed; and to leave them at last to perish in sin and wrath. But No, says the Scripture, this shall never be.—“*They shall be saved.*” “They shall be kept by the power of God, through faith unto Salvation;” and “none shall pluck them out of his hand.” All their enemies, however formidable and numerous, shall not prevail against them. Effectual provision is made for their security. He who died to reconcile them by His Blood, now liveth to preserve them by His power. He is able to preserve them, for He hath “all power in heaven and in earth.” He is able to save them to the uttermost; for “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” He is able to maintain that life which he has given them; for in Him all fulness dwells.

Observe then the whole force of the Inference in the Text. “Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Hath God done so much for His people, and will He do no more? Having wrought out such a salvation for them, “well ordered in all things, and sure,” having induced them to comply with and embrace it, will He leave them to fall short of the blessings proclaimed in it, and to perish at last? Certainly not. Far be such a supposition from us. On the contrary, if He has done the greater work for them,

much more will He do the less. If He pitied them when enemies, *much more* will He love them when friends. If, when they were in rebellion against Him, He would not destroy them, *much more* now that they are at peace with Him, will He preserve them from perishing. If when they were ungodly and impenitent, He gave His Son to die for their offences, *much more* now that they are penitent believers in that Son, will He save them for ever. If when they were alienated from Him in their hearts, He planned, though at such an infinite price, their deliverance from the power of sin, *much more*—having now accomplished their deliverance, having taught them sincerely, though still imperfectly, to fear and love Him, to value His favor, to delight in his service, to live to His glory—*much more* will He now uphold them with His right hand, and will lead them in the way everlasting. Surely it is impossible not to feel the force of this conclusion. The Apostle's reasoning must carry conviction to every understanding and attentive mind. "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more* being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Then my brethren "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant: that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" Who is there among you that hath fled for refuge to the hope of the Gospel, and is living by faith in the Son of God: but at the same time is troubled with doubts, is harassed with fears as to his final condition, as to his perseverance in holiness, as to his enduring unto the end? Distressed and afflicted Soul, mayest thou receive all the consolation, all the encouragement, which the subject before us is so evidently calculated and designed to furnish, and which I will humbly endeavor to administer.

When looking at thy sins, when contemplating thy enemies, when surveying thy difficulties, in times of peculiar darkness, in seasons of unusual temptation, thou art ready to fear that thou shalt be overcome at last: thou art ready to cry out with David under the impression of similar apprehensions, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." 'My enemy will prevail against me.' But oppose these fears. Resist these apprehensions. Meet them with the

reasoning suggested in the text. Call to mind what in times past have been the Lord's gracious dealings with thee. When He first found thee, *where* wast thou? And *what* wast thou? Thou wast in a state of alienation from Him; an enemy to His authority, a rebel to His government. But He spared thee in this state. He did not bring on thee the fierceness of His wrath. He pitied, He had compassion on thee. He called thee to Himself by His gospel. He disposed thy heart to obey the call, and to return unto Him. He accepted thee when thou soughtest His favor. He manifested His loving-kindness to thee, and graciously placed thee among His children. He has taught thee to pray to Him, to hope in His mercy, to trust to His promises, to walk in His ways. He has supported thee when heavy-laden. He has revived thee when fainting. He hath reclaimed thee when wandering. He hath helped thee to this very day. And now, after all this display of His distinguishing grace and goodness to thy soul; after these so many proofs of His compassion and faithfulness, is it likely, is it reasonable, is it possible to suppose, that He will leave thee and forsake thee, and cast thee off for ever? Surely what He hath already done for thee, is a pledge of what He will yet do for thee. If He has already made thee of a rebel a friend; of an enemy a child; much more will He now preserve, and keep, and bless, and save thee to the end. Then lay aside thy fears; fears, so unreasonable in themselves, so dishonorable to thy Saviour. Wait upon Him in faith and prayer. Rely on His mercy and truth. So shalt thou be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man. So shall thy peace, and hope, and joy, be greatly increased. So shalt thou find rest unto thy soul, and shalt go on thy way rejoicing.

But though this be the *chief* use, which we should make of the subject before us, it is not the *only* purpose to which it may be profitably applied. It suggests some serious considerations of a general nature. It reminds us *all* of our natural state. It reminds us that we have *all* been in a state of hostility towards God, of alienation from Him, of rebellion against Him. We *have been* enemies to Him.—But *are we still* enemies to Him? Is this our state at present? Or have we been reconciled unto God? Have we made our peace with Him? Are we no longer enemies, but

friends ; no longer rebels, but children ? If this be not the case ; if we are still opposed to God, and at variance with Him ; O let us consider our state, and our danger. Let us so consider these things, that we may flee from the wrath to come. Let us make peace with our adversary while yet we are in the way with Him. A door of reconciliation is open. All things are now ready. By the declarations of Scripture, by the voice of His Ministers, the Lord is daily saying to us, ' Be ye reconciled unto me.' " Take hold of my strength that ye may make peace with me, and ye shall make peace with me."

Perhaps you say, ' We are reconciled unto God. We think, we hope, that we have made our peace with Him.' See then, that ye have really made it. Deceive not yourselves with a vain presumption. Bear it constantly in mind, that there can be no real reconciliation with God unless there be also an habitual separation from sin. God and sin can never be reconciled. If you are reconciled unto God, you must have put away sin. Christ's salvation is a salvation from sin, from the practice, from the power, from the love of it. True Religion begins with the conversion of the heart from sin to God, and proceeds with the gradual renovation of our nature, and with its restoration to the Divine Image and likeness in righteousness and true holiness. The true Christian is one, who being ' regenerated, and made the Child of God by adoption and grace, is daily renewed by His Holy Spirit.' Is this *your* Religion ? Is this *your* experience of its power and influence on your soul ? Till this be in some measure the case, the Scriptures give you no reason to think that you are as yet reconciled unto God. " The Grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

SERMON XXIII.

On the Sin of Swearing.

MATTHEW, V. 34.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all.

THE Moral Law, or the Law of the Ten Commandments, in which form it was published at Mount Sinai, is calculated to answer two important ends in subserviency to the Covenant of Grace. First, it is a powerful Instrument by which the Spirit convinces men of sin, and so leads them to seek refuge in the Gospel. Secondly, it is a Rule for the conduct of Believers, and furnishes them with a spiritual Standard for trying the sincerity of their profession ; and for measuring the extent of their obedience. These were the uses of the moral Law, under the Jewish Dispensation ; and the same are still its uses under the Christian. Under the Jewish Dispensation, indeed, these ends were by degrees totally defeated by the corrupt glosses and false interpretations which the Priests and Scribes put on the sacred text ; so that by the time at which our Saviour came into the world, “ they had made the word of God of none effect through their traditions.” Stripped of its spiritual meaning, and even circumscribed in its literal sense, the Law was neither useful for reproof, nor profitable for instruction in righteousness. One object, therefore, of Christ’s Ministry was to remedy this evil, and to restore the Law to its original purity and legitimate use. Accordingly, in the Sermon on the Mount, having solemnly declared, that “ He was not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it ;” he proceeded to expose in several instances that corrupt mode of interpretation, which was become so prevalent : and at the same time to point out the true meaning and spiritual importance of the Divine Law. Among other instances He selected the way in which they explained, and by their explanation, in fact, made void the Third Commandment. “ Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

The Prohibition here given, was evidently designed to extend to every disrespectful and irreverent mention of the Name of God, and of things connected with Him, according to that further explication of the Commandment in Leviticus, "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God. I am the Lord."* But how did the Jews explain this Law? They restricted its meaning to the first part of the explication, and totally omitted the second. They represented it as merely saying, "thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thy vows." Thus, by their interpretation they made void the Law, for by limiting the prohibition exclusively to perjury, and to the breaking of vows, they indirectly, at least, gave a licence to the custom of profane swearing, and to the introduction of oaths into common conversation, or on unnecessary occasions, as if these practices were not equally forbidden in the original Commandment, and were not equally a violation of its holy and spiritual injunctions. In opposition then to this defective and most mischievous explanation of the Law, our Lord declared in the text, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all." And then, lest it should be supposed that this interpretation, however comprehensive, referred only to the irreverent mention of the Divine Name, and not to every kind and description of profane imprecation and oath, He added, "neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne: nor by the earth, for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black."

Such was the occasion on which our Lord delivered the admonition in the text, "Swear not at all:" and would, that there were no occasion at these times to repeat the admonition! But alas! "Because of swearing the land mourneth." That corrupt interpretation of the Commandment, which was authoritatively taught among the Jews, is practically adopted by the great bulk of nominal Christians: and numbers of those, who would be afraid and ashamed of committing perjury, are not afraid or ashamed of habitually profaning the name of God. Indeed, the practice of Swearing, and the consequent violation of the Third Commandment,

* Leviticus, xix. 12.

prevails to a most dreadful and a most enormous extent; and is a melancholy, but decisive proof of the little real influence, which true Religion has on the minds of a very large proportion of those who bear the Christian Name. It is this consideration of the prevalence and magnitude of the sin in question, that has determined me, on the present occasion, to bring it more immediately and distinctly before you. And may the Lord, whose Name is Holy, and who is greatly to be feared in the Congregation of His Saints, graciously assist me in the exposition of His Law, and powerfully apply it to your hearts and consciences, for correction or instruction in Righteousness according to your several wants, cases, and circumstances!

I shall endeavor,

I. To explain and illustrate the Sin in question.

II. To shew its aggravated Guilt.

III. To point out the awful State of those who practise it:

I. The Sin in question is one of those which are called sins of the tongue; for it is committed by that unruly member. But sins of the tongue, like all other sins, take their rise in the heart. It is "out of the abundance of the heart, that the mouth speaketh." The language of the lips is but an indication of the state of the heart. This point must be constantly kept in view during the whole of our discussion, or we shall at last arrive at only very imperfect ideas on the subject.—Our present business, however, is with the *overt act* of the Sin, which consists in *profaning the Name of God*. To *profane* sacred things is to treat them as if they were common and unholy. To profane the *Name of God* is to treat it in this way; to use it with irreverence and contempt; to speak of God, and of things relating to Him in an irreligious and ungodly manner, without any awful impression on the mind of His Presence, His Majesty, and His Holiness.—This is the Sin in question; but for the clearer explanation of it, I will consider it under three distinct and principal branches.

1. One branch of this Sin, and a very evident breach of the Divine Commandment, is cursing and swearing. Under this head are to be ranged those horrid imprecations by which persons express the passion and enmity of their hearts, and invoke the Divine vengeance on themselves and others. Under this head, also, are to be placed those blas-

phemous and impious expressions, which men intermingle with their language, and by which they attempt to give either point or weight to their discourse. But on this head there is no occasion to enlarge. Cursing and swearing are unfortunately too well known among us, to require any detailed explanation.

2. Another branch of the Sin in question, is the familiar and irreverent introduction of oaths into common conversation, and about the common concerns of life. The taking of an oath is a religious act. It is a solemn appeal to God, who seeth and searcheth the heart, as to the truth and sincerity of our words and professions. Whenever therefore we are *lawfully* put to our oath, we should yet remember, that it is to be taken with that reverential awe and religious impression which the solemnity imposes. To introduce then this act of religion into our common intercourse with one another, is a great profanation. To invoke God to witness the truth of our words, or to use expressions equivalent to such an invocation, when no oath is lawfully required of us, when no religious feeling is entertained, when nothing but the establishing of our own veracity, on some disputed point, or in respect to some worldly matter, is in view, is evidently to violate both the letter and the spirit of the commandment; to take the Name of the Lord our God in vain." It is to use sacred things as if they were common: to treat the Majesty of God with lightness and contempt; and consequently to profane His holy Name.

3. A third branch of this Sin consists in mingling religious language in our common discourse without any corresponding feelings in our heart. To this head we may refer the light and inconsiderate use of such ejaculations as these, "God bless me!" "The Lord have mercy on me!" "As I hoped to be saved!" and such like expressions: expressions, which are common indeed in the mouths of men, but which, when used without becoming seriousness of mind, as is too generally the case, are little better than a profane mockery of real piety. To the same class we may also refer the irreverent mention of sacred words, such as "God," and "Christ," and "Lord," and "Heaven," and many others of a like description, which men use as mere unmeaning exclamations, for the purpose of filling up, or of connecting

their ordinary discourse : but all of which are violations of the divine commandment, and profane the Name of God.

Such is the Sin, against which we are so strongly admonished in the text. "I say unto you, Swear not at all." I now proceed,

II. To shew its aggravated Guilt.

Every transgression of the law is sin, and brings guilt on the transgressor. But every sin is not of equal magnitude, nor involves the transgressor in equal guilt. Some sins are more aggravated than others, and bring with them a larger share of guilt. Such is the case with the Sin before us. It is a great and an aggravated sin, and consequently entails a proportionate degree of Guilt. This representation will be fully proved from the three following considerations of its nature and quality.

1. It is a *gratuitous* Sin.

By a *gratuitous* sin, I mean, a sin wantonly committed, without any of those inducements by which men are usually drawn into the commission of evil. Temptation indeed is no justification of sin. A man cannot plead in defence of a sinful action, that he was tempted to commit it. But yet it is evident, that the circumstances under which a man is induced to the commission of a sin, has a tendency in some degree to increase or to diminish the relative guilt of it. The sin of Peter in denying Christ, was doubtless a very heinous offence, yet being committed under the immediate impression of a sudden and personal fear, strikes us as less aggravated in its guilt, than that of Judas ; who, from the sordid love of gain, deliberately bargained to sell his master. But the Sin of which we are speaking, is totally void of any inducement at all. No man can plead in extenuation of the guilt of Swearing even the poor excuse which strong Temptation furnishes. It is a Sin which offers no gratification to pride, to lust, or to covetousness. It holds out to those who commit it no prospect of credit, of pleasure, or of profit. They cannot say that they are the greater, the happier, or the richer, for profaning the Name of God. It is a sin altogether gratuitous ; the mere overflowings of ungodliness ; the spontaneous effusion of the enmity and abomination of the heart : a Sin, which men are under no solicitation to commit, and which they can only commit for the sake of sinning.

2. It is also a *wilful* Sin.

Every Sin may be said in one sense to be wilful: for it is committed at the time with the consent of the will. It is this consent in fact, which constitutes the very essence of Sin. If the will do not yield to a temptation, no guilt is contracted: but no sooner does the will consent, than the sin is virtually committed, and the Soul guilty before God. —But *wilful* in the sense, in which I am using the word, has a still stronger meaning. It means a predetermination of the Will to commit sin; an habitual readiness of mind to comply with the suggestion to evil, whenever it occurs; an obstinate adherence to the practice of it, without any serious attempt or intention to discontinue and oppose it. Now it is obvious that sin committed under such circumstances, and with such a disposition, is of a nature peculiarly aggravated. Yet such is the case with the sin before us. It is in the sense here given, a *wilful* Sin. It is committed, not only with the consent of the will, but without any serious effort or desire to prevent the commission of it. Persons indeed are apt to deny this position. They are ready to say, that when they swear or profane the Name of God, it is generally without any meaning at all, and therefore certainly without any deliberate or evil intention; that the words escape from their lips before they are aware; and even against their wishes; and that so far from the offence being wilful and premeditated, it has not even the assent of the will. —But these representations are not true. In refutation of them we may adduce the following proof. Let a person the most addicted to this sin, be in the company of one of his fellow-creatures, whose authority he fears, or whose favor he desires; let him be in the presence of his master, of his minister, or of a magistrate: and what is the consequence? He refrains his tongue from evil. He sets a watch over the door of his mouth, that he offend not. He checks his sinful propensity; and for the time abstains from the use of profane language. Is not this notoriously the case? And if it be so, is it not also notoriously the case, that he might at all times abstain from this practice, and check this propensity, if he were so disposed? Does not this one circumstance prove that the fault is in the Will: and that if this Sin is practised, the practice arises from the Will not being steadfastly and habitually set against it? It

is evident that the Will not only consents to the Sin, but is also previously ready to commit it. And what is a sin thus committed but a Wilful Sin?

3. Further, it is a *presumptuous Sin*.

By a *presumptuous sin* is meant a sin of a very daring and malignant nature: a sin committed, as it were, in defiance of God, and against light, knowledge, and conviction. Surely sins of this description must bring with them a guilt of peculiar aggravation. But of this description is the Sin in the text. It is a sin immediately committed against God Himself. Every sin indeed is an attack made upon God. But the Sin of swearing and profaning the Name of God is an attack made on Him, not in the person of His creatures, but in His own Person: it is an attack directly made on his Majesty and Holiness; and made too in open opposition to His commands, and in a daring defiance of His threatenings. Under both dispensations God has most solemnly and expressly forbidden the practice of this Sin—under the Jewish dispensation by a voice from heaven, and in words, written with His own finger on a Table of Stone, “Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord Thy God in vain:”—under the Christian, by His Son, whom He sent from heaven and has commanded us to hear; and whose words are these, “I say unto you, Swear not at all.” Nor are any persons, who have the light of the Gospel around them, so ignorant as not to know these things. The ways in which they speak of this Sin, in which, as we have seen, at some times they altogether refrain from it, and at other times endeavor to excuse and palliate it, all plainly shew, that they *know* the practice of it to be *wrong*. They know and are convinced in their own consciences, that God has forbidden them to take His Name in vain. But notwithstanding this knowledge and conviction, they dare to break the command, and *presumptuously sin*.

From this detailed view of the nature and quality of the Sin in question, we may form some just conceptions of its magnitude. It is a Sin, *gratuitous, wilful, and presumptuous*. How great then, how aggravated must be its Guilt!

III. I point out the awful State of those who practise this Sin.

On this head there can be little necessity for enlarging, If such, as we have seen, be the aggravated Guilt of profan-

ing the Name of God, most awful indeed must be the state of those, who practise this Sin. Some few observations however may serve to illustrate and enforce this conclusion.

1. The State of those who practise this sin must be most awful, because God has, in an especial manner, denounced his vengeance against them. He has solemnly declared, that "He will not hold them guiltless." Now this expression implies much more than it may at first sight seem to denote. When the Almighty says, that "He will not hold them guiltless," He intends to declare, in a manner peculiarly strong and impressive, that *He will hold them guilty*. He will not overlook their sin. He will not forget it. He will write it in his book. He will treasure it in his memory. He will one day bring them into judgment; will call them to account for their profane and contemptuous disregard of his Majesty and Power; will convict and condemn them before the assembled universe; and will finally pour out upon them his wrath to the uttermost. Thus He will hold them guilty. In proof of God's peculiar indignation against this sin, do we not occasionally witness, even in this life, some examples of his judgment on those who are guilty of it? Have we not sometimes heard of sinners of this description, who in the midst of their oaths and imprecations have been cut off by some sudden and signal display of Almighty vengeance, and have been sent in a moment into eternity with blasphemy in their mouths, and with all their guilt upon their heads? Such things have been; and whenever they do occur, in a most striking manner, they admonish us of the awful state of those who practise this sin, and on whom the wrath of God abideth. Surely the following passage from the Book of Psalms, in which the impiety and the doom of these sinners are so strongly depicted, is sufficient to strike terror into the soul of the most hardened swearer. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing, like as with his garment; so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle where-with he is girded continually."*

* Psalm, cix. 17, 18, 19.

2. The State of those who practise this sin must be very awful, inasmuch as it is a state of ripeness and fitness for destruction. When Judas the traitor died, it is said of him, "he fell by transgression, that he might go to his own place."* This place was hell, the place of torment and punishment; and it is called *his own place*, because it was the place, and the only place for which he was fitted. It was the place prepared for him and suited to him; the place, where he would meet with wickedness congenial to his own.—And when profane and impious swearers die, whither will they go? What place is reserved for them? They must go to "*their own place*." And what place is this but Hell; the only place for which they are fitted and prepared? Already they breathe the sentiments, and speak the language of Hell. Already they show their congeniality with this place of sin and blasphemy. This is *their place* then, to which they must evidently go. There only will they meet with associates and employments adapted to their taste and nature. There, with the devil and his angels, will they be tormented day and night, and will gnaw their tongues for pain, and will curse and blaspheme the God of Heaven for ever.—Is it not an awful State indeed to be fit and ripe for such a place?

3. To practise this sin is to be in a most awful State, because it is a certain sign of an unregenerate condition. No man who profanes the name of God can be the child of God. I will adduce two, out of many proofs, in support of this assertion.

Those who are born of God have the fear of Him in their hearts. It is a part of that new and holy nature, which in regeneration they have received. He hath taught them to fear his name. How then can they profane it? How can they speak lightly of that God, whom as a Father they venerate and love with every pious and devout affection? They cannot do it. Those who commit this sin, plainly testify that they have no fear of God before their eyes. They stand in awe of men, and in *their* presence will abstain from oaths; but they stand not in awe of God, nor are afraid in *His* presence to swear. How then can they be his children? "They are of their Father the Devil, and the Works of their Father they will do."

* Acts, i. 25.

Again we are expressly told, that "whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin."* He may be occasionally overtaken by a fault. By inadvertence or surprise he may enter into temptation. But he will not commit sin; he will not *knowingly, allowedly, and habitually* practise any evil way. Nay, it is added, "he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The new nature, which in regeneration he has received from God, is holy in its principle, and will not allow him to live in sin. Born of the Spirit, He walks in the Spirit, and cannot wilfully and presumptuously sin against Him. Those who thus sin are not born of God. Those who practise any sin, and consequently the sin in the text, give ample and unequivocal proof that they are still in a carnal, an unregenerate state; a state, in which they cannot please God; a state, in which if they continue, all the mercies of God can have no other effect, than to sink them into deeper and heavier condemnation.

And now my brethren, what say you to those things? Are you practising the Sin which has been explained? Are you involved in the aggravated Guilt of it? Are you in the awful state which has been described? When I consider how very widely the dreadful practice of profaning the Name of God prevails; when I know how generally our towns and villages, our streets and lanes, our fields and houses, resound with oaths and imprecations, with profane and impious language, I cannot but greatly fear, that some of you at least are too deeply concerned in the truths which have been stated. O remember, if your conscience at this moment bears testimony against you, and tells you with a voice, which you cannot misunderstand, that you are one of those who take the name of God in vain—O remember, what you have seen to be your awful state. Unregenerated by the Spirit of God; ripe for destruction, and under the curse of God, you are madly rushing on destruction; you are wantonly exposing yourself to instant, everlasting ruin. And for the sake of *What*? Of a Sin, which has neither pleasure nor profit, nor credit attached to the commission of it; which yields no present gratification, and which never can yield any thing but sorrow, shame, and death. Think not to escape the force of this conclusion, by saying to yourself,

* 1 John, iii. 9.

that you do not *practise* this sin : that you only swear occasionally, under peculiar circumstances, when your temper is ruffled, or when you are off your guard. Call to mind the solemn declaration in the Text, "I say unto you, swear not at all." Every person, be assured, is guilty of habitually profaning the Name of God, who does not habitually desist from the practice. Bear in mind that "blasphemies proceed out of the heart." The very essence of this sin consists in that total absence of all godly fear, in that daring and impious disregard of the Divine Presence and Majesty, which precede and accompany the commission of it. How then can ever the *occasional allowance* of such a state of heart be defended? How can it consist with the profession of Christianity? My brethren, listen to the Apostolical injunctions; "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you." "Put off also all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, out of your mouth." "Above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea, be yea, and your nay, be nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." Live in the spirit of these injunctions. Let not blessing and cursing proceed out of the same mouth. Let not your tongue, which was made to bless the Lord, be allowed to profane his Name. Use that member, which distinguisheth you from the brute creation, to edification, and not to destruction. At the same time, remember, that since it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, it is *there*, in the heart, that the great work of reformation must begin, and must be carried on. The tree must be made good, or the fruit will never be good. So long as the tree is evil, the fruit will be evil. So long as the heart is unclean, the tongue will be polluted. Here then apply the remedy. Seek to be purified in the inner man. Pray for the regenerating grace of God to renew and sanctify your heart. So shall your conversation be seasoned with grace. So shall it minister grace unto the hearers.

SERMON XXIV.

The Blessings of Redemption.

LUKE, i. 68, 69.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for He hath visited, and redeemed His People, and hath raised up a Horn of Salvation for us, in the House of His Servant David.

THIS was the language in which the aged Zacharias expressed the devout and joyful feelings of his soul. For a time he had been deprived of the power of speech, because he had not believed the words of the angel. But when the season of this temporary chastisement was over, the first use which he made of his tongue, was to break forth into praises and thanksgivings to God. Being filled with the Holy Ghost, he gave vent to his pious feelings in pouring forth that divine song of which the text is the beginning. And what was the subject of his song? It was that great, and glorious event, to which the people of God had always been looking forward with anxiety and hope; of which all the prophets had spoken; and of which the pious remnant among the Jews were now in constant expectation, namely, the coming into the world of the promised Saviour: that righteous Branch, whom the Lord was to raise unto David; and who, as a King was to "reign and prosper, and to execute judgment and justice on the earth." This event, so long foretold, so anxiously desired, was now about to be accomplished. His immediate birth had been announced by a messenger from heaven. His Forerunner, himself the subject of prophecy, was also already born under miraculous circumstances. In the near and certain prospect therefore of the appearance of this glorious person, Zacharias spoke of Him, as if he were already come, and said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of His servant David." We see then with what propriety this divine song is introduced in-

to the service of our church : for if Zacharias had reason in the near approach of the event, to bless God for having visited, redeemed, and saved his people ; much more reason have *we* to bless Him for these mercies, to whom they are so much more clearly and distinctly revealed. In this passage, the mercies which we have received from the condescension and grace of God, are described by three different terms, each of which I will separately consider, and explain, shewing the connection which subsists between them, and the grounds which, when taken together, they furnish for our gratitude and joy.

I. " God hath *visited* his people."

When God is said in Scripture to *visit* men, it sometimes means that He will come to them in wrath, and will inflict judgments and punishments on them. As when it is said, " I will visit the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." And " again I will visit their offences with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." And again, " Shall I not visit for these things ?" (saith the Lord) " and shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as this ?" But such, clearly is not the meaning of the expression in the text. Here it signifies, as the sense plainly shews, a merciful interposition : a signification in which also the word is often used in Scripture. As when the Lord is said to have "*visited* Sarah, so that she conceived a son in her old age." In like manner, He is said to have *visited* the Israelites in Egypt, when He sent Moses to deliver them out of that cruel bondage. Thus also the Psalmist prays in behalf of the church, and nation of Israel. " O Lord of Hosts, look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine : " that is, regard it with favor, and shew mercy unto it. In this sense, then the Lord is said in the text to have *visited* his people. Zacharias blesses and praises Him for His merciful interposition in their behalf.—But of what kind was this interposition ? In what particulars did this His mercy shew itself ? for we have as yet reached but a part of the sense of the expression. The Lord indeed did mercifully interpose in behalf of his people. But this is not all which is meant. He *visited* them in *mercy*. But he did more. He fulfilled the expression literally. He *visited* them also in *Person*. He not only interposed to shew them mercy ; but He came himself to bring, and to dispense that

mercy. He laid aside his glory as God. He came down from Heaven; and entered into this world. Yea, He came in our nature; and to the astonishment of the heavenly world was found in fashion as a man. Born of a woman, he became partaker of flesh and blood. Born under the law, He became, though himself the Law-giver, yet subject to the Law. And all this he did, he it remembered, in mercy to man; on a gracious errand of love and peace. On contemplating this extraordinary event, well may we adopt the Psalmist's words, and say, "Lord, what is man that thou art (*so*) mindful of Him? and the Son of man, that Thou (*thus*) visitest him?"—When God would graciously interpose in our behalf; when He would show mercy to us; was there no messenger to be found but the Lord of Life Himself? No, my brethren, there was none else. It was only by visiting us, by coming down from heaven, and taking our nature that He could accomplish his gracious purpose in our behalf. We shall better understand in what this necessity consisted, when we consider the next particular presented in the text.

II. He hath redeemed his People.

To *redeem* is to deliver out of bondage, or captivity, by the payment of a price. When therefore it is said that the Lord has redeemed us, or has paid a price for our deliverance, it is implied that we were in a state of bondage, or captivity. And this is the state of men by nature. They are prisoners to the Justice of God, shut up under his righteous sentence to condemnation. Offenders against his holy law, they here incurred the penalty which is due to their offences. Having forfeited the favor of the Almighty, and provoked the severity of his wrath, they have been delivered up by Him in bondage to Satan, and to their own lusts, reserved for the judgment of the great day. Such is by nature the state of men. And what hinders them from being set free? What prevents the Almighty from remitting the sentence, and restoring the Captives to liberty? His own Justice and Holiness prevent him. He could not forgive men, and release them from this bondage, without impeaching his own character, and bringing his own glorious perfections into suspicion. Some satisfaction must be made to his Justice. Something must be done, by which it may be made to appear that God in remitting the punishment of

sin is still just and holy; and that while He pardons and releases the offender, He still abhors the offence.—But where could such a satisfaction be found? Man could not find it. He had no consideration to lay down: no price to give for his redemption. But God could do, what man could not do. His wisdom could provide a sufficient satisfaction to his own Justice. His mercy could find a price for our redemption. And what was this price, but the blood of his incarnate Son, which was shed as a ransom for the sin of the world. Thus He is said to have “purchased the Church with his own blood.”* Thus St. Paul declares that we are “redeemed not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” “In whom (says St. Paul) we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” With such a sacrifice the Divine Justice was satisfied. It was plain, when so great a ransom was required, that sin was not a light and trifling thing; and God, in justifying the sinner, shewed Himself to be Just. Pleased therefore with this sacrifice, accepting this ransom, He opened the prison-door, and proclaimed liberty to the captives. He reverses the sentence of condemnation; releases them from the power of Satan; and sends his Spirit to free them from the dominion of their lusts. Here then we see the necessity of which we spake under the former head. We see *why* the Lord thus visited his people. He visited in order that He might redeem them. He came into this world as man, that as man He might die, and so might make satisfaction for sin in the nature which had sinned. The full effect of this gracious and wonderful interposition we shall more clearly contemplate on considering the third particular submitted to our notice in the text.

III. He “hath raised up a Horn of salvation for us.” This expression of a *Horn of Salvation* is a figurative expression; the meaning of which may be thus explained. The principal defence, and the greatest strength of horned cattle lie in their horns. It is with these weapons that they attack their enemies, and defend themselves. Hence in Scripture a Horn is used as an emblem of strength. Thus Moses comparing Joseph to a young bullock, says, “His horns are like the horns of unicorns;” that is, his strength

* Acts, xx. 28.

and power shall be very great. So in the *Psalms* we find it said, "I will make the horn of David to bud;" that is, I will make his power and glory to flourish and increase. In like manner the expression in the text denotes the strength of the salvation, which is there spoken of. A *Horn of Salvation* means a strong Salvation. And indeed, in the other translation used in the service of our church, the phrase is rendered after this meaning. "He hath raised up a mighty Salvation for us." Here then we see the full effect of the merciful interposition in our behalf. The Lord, having visited and redeemed us, hath raised up a mighty Salvation for us. Having taken on himself our nature, and having given his life a ransom for our sins, He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Through his incarnation and death, He has wrought out a Salvation suited to all their wants, and mighty for pulling down the strong-holds of sin and Satan. The strength of this salvation lies in the Glorious Person by whom it has been wrought. Being God and man in one Christ, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. His precious blood-shedding was a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Having "died for our offences, He is now risen for our justification;" and being set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He hath all power in heaven, and in earth, and will reign till He has put all enemies under his foot. Thus he is become a *Horn of Salvation* to all his people; to all those who flee to Him for refuge, and put their trust in his mercy and promises. He will save them from all their enemies. He will deliver them from the guilt, and punishment of sin. He will free them from its power. He will rescue them from Satan. He will ransom them from the grave. He will redeem them from Hell. He will defend them as with a shield: He will gladden them with his presence: He will guide them with his counsel: He will give unto them eternal life; and none shall be able to pluck them out of his hands.—"Blessed then be the Lord God of Israel who hath so visited and redeemed his people; and hath raised up such a salvation for us in the House of his Servant David." "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm hath gotten him the victory." "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath

does it ; shout ye lower parts of the earth ; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein ; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."—How devoutly is it to be wished, that such were the genuine language of every heart ! that every mouth could truly adopt these lively expressions of praise and joy !

But alas ! to many these glad tidings of salvation convey no joy : by many, if heard at all, they are heard with indifference, or even with disgust. How comes it thus to pass ? Are not all men interested in these tidings ? Are not all men by nature under bondage to sin and Satan, and consequently in need of this mighty salvation ? Yes, most assuredly. But all men have not faith. They do not give credit to what the Scriptures tell them of their state by nature. They do not believe that they are prisoners shut up unto condemnation. They do not believe that sin has rendered them obnoxious to the divine judgments ; that the wrath of God abideth on them ; and that as unpardoned sinners they have nothing to look forward to, but to fiery indignation, which shall destroy the adversary. Tell them all these things, they will not believe them. Shew them the plain word of God in confirmation of these truths, they will not be convinced. They take up some strange unscriptural notions, and satisfy themselves with the presumptuous hope, that they " shall do well at last." Though they should even die in their sins, yet they trust that they shall escape, and consequently have no fears, no apprehensions respecting their souls.—Now to such persons, what joy, what pleasure can it be to hear that God hath visited and redeemed his people ? Whether Christ have come into the world or not, whether He have died to purchase pardon for sinners, or not, is to them a matter of no concern. How then can they rejoice at it ? They feel no need of what he has done and suffered. In their own opinion, they are whole, and want not a Physician. How then can they value his attendance, or be thankful for his prescriptions ? In a word, the Gospel is hid to them ; for the God of this World has blinded their minds that they cannot see. Led captive by Satan, enslaved to their own lusts, fast bound to the World, they yet feel not the chain, but deem themselves to be free. How then can they rejoice at the offers of Redemption ? Would that these words might reach their hearts, and might remove the veil

focus their eyes ! Grieved of their guilt, convinced of their danger, and trembling with apprehension, how highly would they then prize the glad tidings of Salvation ! How feelingly would they then join in praising God for his mercy in that He hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a Horn of Salvation for them ! May God teach them to sing this song with the spirit, and with the understanding ! May He open the blind eyes ; that knowing the day of their visitation, they may yet turn unto the Lord, and serve Him in newness of life !

“ To you, however, who believe, He is precious.” You who have been taught the Truth as it is in Jesus, if indeed ye knew Him ; you who feel your Sins, who lament your corruptions, who groan for deliverance from this body of Sin and Death, you know the value of Redemption. You rejoice in the glorious tidings, which the text brings to your remembrance. You can feelingly adopt its language ; and can bless the Lord for His mercy in having come to visit us in great humility, and to raise up a mighty Salvation for us.

Well, my Brethren, rejoice in this Salvation. It is your privilege to rejoice in it. The Lord Himself, who came to visit, and redeem you, has said, that “ your Joy should be full.” His prophet has set you an example to this effect. “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.”* His Apostle has given you a command to this effect, “ Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.” But while you thus rejoice ; while you joy and glory in this Salvation, this mighty Salvation, raised up for you ; O see, that it is indeed a Salvation to you ; a Salvation from the love, and the power of sin ; a Salvation from the law, and the fear of the World. See that you are redeemed by it from all iniquity. See that you are redeemed by it from your vain conversation. You may glory in your privilege. You may joy in your Salvation. But your glory is but vain glory, and your joy but as the crackling of thorns, if the Redemption, which you profess to have received, has not wrought a new work in

* Habakkuk, iii. 17, 18.

your flesh ; has not greatly humbled you ; has not mortified the pride and lust of your heart, has not brought you down as a condemned, polluted, miserable sinner at the foot of the Cross ; and has not inspired you with a holy desire and purpose of leading a new life, and of bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. That only is Salvation, which saves us from ourselves ; which " casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Never rest satisfied, never suppose, that you have attained, till you possess this inward, this experimental evidence, that you, are, indeed, an Heir of Salvation. Be not, however, cast down. Bear in mind that this Salvation is a mighty Salvation. Your favour is mighty ; all-mighty, able to save to the uttermost. Be sincere before Him. Give yourself up to *Him* really, and from the heart, without partiality and without hypocrisy ; and He will save you to the uttermost. You shall experience His power. You shall find Him mighty. He shall make you more than a Conqueror, and in due time shall put all enemies under your feet.

SERMON XXV.

A Right State of Heart Described and Enforced.

ACTS, viii. 21.

Thou hast neither Part, nor Lot in this Matter : for thy Heart is not right in the Sight of God.

IF we read the chapter, from which these words are taken, we shall find, that they were spoken to a man, who, while he professed himself a disciple of Christ, still retained a worldly, covetous, and wicked heart. He believed and had been baptized ; but notwithstanding this outward appearance of religion, he plainly shewed that no real change had taken place within. St. Peter therefore

openly addressed him in the words of the text, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." The Apostle neither flattered the formal professor nor spared the hypocrite, nor encouraged the self-deceiver. With great faithfulness he admonished this sinner of his state and danger : and in so doing has reminded us of a very important truth ; namely, that whatever a man's religious profession may be, yet if his heart be not right in the sight of God, he is in reality no Christian, nor has any share in the blessings and privileges of the Gospel.

Perhaps there is no truth more generally admitted than this. Most persons, when pressed on the subject, are ready to allow that in religion the state of the heart is every thing. But how few are there, who make a practical application of this truth to themselves ! Where shall we find the man, who puts this question to himself, "Is my heart right in the sight of God ?" Or if he go so far, how rarely does he go any farther. How rarely does he enquire what is meant by having his heart right in the sight of God ! If conscience at times remind him of the danger of not having it right, yet how soon is he satisfied with his state ! How quickly does he conclude that he has nothing to fear ! What little pains does he take to examine himself ; to discover what the state of his heart really is, and what it ought to be !

Possibly, my brethren, this may be the case with ourselves. It may be, that we have never seriously enquired into the state of our own heart : but have rather taken for granted that all is right, than have *proved* it to be so by a close and careful examination. It may be that we have never attentively considered, *when* a man's heart is right in the sight of God, nor *wherein* the necessity of its being so consists.

These are two points, which the text offers to our notice ; and which with the view of leading you, through God's blessing, to a profitable consideration of the subject, I shall endeavor to explain.

I. By a man's heart we are to understand his prevailing views, dispositions, and desires. When these are such, as his situation and his circumstances require them to be, then his heart is right in the sight of God. What then are the situation and circumstances of man ? He is a sinner under a

dispensation of mercy. By sin he has lost God's favor and ruined his soul. But by grace he is placed in such a situation and under such circumstances, that he may recover God's favor and save his soul. The offers of Salvation are made to him. The way of Salvation is laid open to him. He is called on to accept these offers, and to walk in this way. When therefore he obeys this call, when his prevailing views, dispositions, and desires are such as in this situation, and under these circumstances, they ought to be, then his heart is right in the sight of God.—Let us see what are the particulars in which this state of heart consists.

1. When the heart is in a right state, it is deeply humbled before God on account of its sinfulness. God abhors sin, and condemns the sinner. The sinner then must abhor sin, and condemn himself, or his heart cannot be right in the sight of God. How can things be otherwise? God sees that all men are great sinners; that sin is a dreadful evil; that no excuse can be made for it; and that all attempts to justify it are vain and presumptuous. When a man then esteems himself to be a little Sinner, or perhaps, hardly a Sinner at all; when he thinks lightly of sin in general, and still more lightly of his own sin in particular; when he endeavors to excuse, or even to justify whatever he has done amiss: it must be clear, that so long as this is the state of his heart, it cannot be right before God. While his views of sin and of himself are so widely different from God's views: while he favors his sins, and God abhors them; while he justifies himself, and God condemns him; while such is the proud and impenitent state of his heart, how is it possible that it can be right in the sight of God? In order to be right, it must be greatly changed. He must see things as God sees them. He must think of sin as God thinks of it. He must confess and feel his own depravity. He must take shame to himself because of his impurity, in the sight of a holy God; and must lie utterly confounded and abased at the recollection of his own vileness, contrasted with the Divine Glory and Majesty. Such is the humbled state of heart which becomes man as a Sinner; and such, therefore, is its state, when it is right in the sight of God.

2. Another mark of a man's heart being in a right state, is that he thankfully believes in Jesus Christ for the pardon of his sins. God, who is rich in mercy, is not willing that

Sinners should die eternally. He hath, therefore, provided for them a way of Salvation. He has shewed them how their sins may be pardoned; what they must do to recover His favor; and by what means they may obtain eternal life. So long then as a man refuses to comply with this gracious purpose; so long as he rejects these offers of pardon and peace; so long as he wilfully continues at enmity with his Maker; how is it possible that his heart can be right in the sight of God? It cannot be right. It must be in a state displeasing and offensive to Him. It never can be right till he obey the Gospel, and comply with the terms of it. And what are these terms? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Come unto Him, and He will give you rest." "Take His yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls." These are the invitations, the Commands of the Gospel. These are the *Terms* with which it calls on us to comply. In other words, God in the Gospel speaks to us thus. 'Sinners, I have seen and pitied your lost condition. You have broken my holy law, and incurred a dreadful punishment. I wish not your destruction: but without some sufficient satisfaction to my Justice and Holiness, I cannot pardon you. You can never find such a satisfaction; but I have found it for you. I have given my only begotten Son to be a Sacrifice for your sins. I have set Him forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood, for the remission of your sins. I have given Him to die on the Cross. I have raised Him from the dead. I have set Him at my own right hand in heavenly places; that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. Look then at Him by faith. Receive Him for your Saviour. Believe on Him with the heart. So shall you be justified from all things. Your sins shall be forgiven: your souls shall be saved: your everlasting happiness shall be secured.'

Thus God speaks in the Gospel. How does the heart, which is right in His sight, reply? It replies, 'Lord, I humbly and thankfully embrace thy gracious offers. I know that I am a lost and guilty creature. I am far off from Thee, and if left to myself must perish. I deserve to perish, but blessed be thy name, there is mercy with Thee. Thou hast given me a Saviour, even thy Son Jesus Christ; and I joyfully receive Him as my Saviour. I look to Him:

I trust in Him : I desire only to be found in Him. His death is my only plea. His righteousness is my only safety. I hope that for His sake thou art reconciled to me. Lord, I believe ; help thou my unbelief.'

Such is the language which becomes a Sinner under a dispensation of mercy. Such therefore is the language of a man's heart, when it is right in the sight of God. But

3. Another particular is yet to be noticed. The Man whose heart is in the state described, longs after holiness. He not only humbly condemns himself because of his guilt. He not only thankfully believes in Jesus Christ for the pardon of his sins : but he earnestly desires to be made holy, to be thoroughly weaned from the love of sin, and to be entirely freed from the power of it. God is holy, and loves holiness, and would have all men to be holy, even as He is holy. How is it possible then for the heart to be right in his sight, if it does not love what He loves, and desire to be what He is ? If men are anxious to have their sins pardoned, only that they may escape punishment, while they have no anxiety to be made free from sin, that they may serve God and walk in newness of life ; they clearly have not those views, dispositions, and desires which become their situation and circumstances. They shew that they are ignorant of God and of their own heart, and of the whole design of the Gospel. God, in having given to them the Gospel, intends their deliverance, not only from the pains of hell, but also from the power of sin. He knows that without this deliverance, there can be no real salvation for them. He knows that so long as the soul willingly serves sin, it can never be happy. Therefore He says to it, " Be thou holy, for I am holy." And when a man's heart is right, under a conviction of the same truths, he says, ' I desire to be holy, that I may be happy. I would not willingly obey sin in any of the lusts thereof. I long to serve God, with all my powers. I grieve that I do not serve him better. Lord, make me a partaker of thy holiness. Break the chains of sin, with which I am tied and bound. Give me victory over my inward enemies, and deliver me from this body of sin and death, which cleaves to me, distresses me, and hinders my going in thy ways.' So speaks the man whom I am attempting to describe.—On the whole we see *when* a man's heart is right in the sight of God. I shew

II. Wherein the necessity of its being so consists.

It consists in this ; that until a man's heart be in the state described, he has "no part nor lot in the matter:" he is a stranger to true religion, and has no share nor interest in the blessings of the Gospel. There are several arguments, by which this conclusion may be proved.

In the first place, till a man's heart be thus right in the sight of God, he can have *no Interest in the Promises of the Gospel*. Call to mind what these Promises are, as well as the Persons to whom they are given. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "God giveth grace to the humble." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy." Again, "This is the promise which God hath given us, even eternal life ; and this life is in his Son." "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life." "By Him all that believe are justified from all things."—Further, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law, but under Grace." "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."—Such are the Promises of the Gospel : and how then is it possible for a man to have any share or lot in the matter, whose heart is not right in the sight of God ? If he humble and condemn not himself on account of his sins ; if he believe not in Jesus Christ for the pardon of them ; if he desire not deliverance from the love and power of them, what has he to do, what can he have to do, with these Promises ? They are not given to such as him. They are given to the humble, to the believing, to the seekers after Holiness. He does not answer to this description ; consequently he can have no interest in the mercy, and blessedness contained in them.

In the second place, till a man's heart be right in the sight of God, he can *neither perform the Duties, nor taste even the present Pleasures of Religion*. To perform the Duties of Religion, is not merely to go through the forms and ceremonies of religious worship. This a man may do, let his heart be in a state ever so contrary to the one described. To perform the Duties of Religion, as it is here meant, is to perform them acceptably to God, in a spiritual manner, with a penitent, a believing, and an holy frame of

mind. But how can this be done by those, who are unhumbled in heart, who have no living Faith in Jesus Christ, nor any real desire after holiness? Such persons cannot pray to God, cannot worship Him, cannot serve Him, as He requires. They may offer to Him lip-service; but that will not satisfy God. They cannot worship Him with the heart, which is the only service that he will accept; and consequently, not performing the Duties of Religion, they can clearly have no share in its privileges.

Neither can they taste even the present Pleasures of Religion. True Religion brings great pleasures in this life. But those only whose hearts are right in the sight of God, can enjoy and relish them. Others can know nothing of them, and therefore cannot taste them. Consider what these pleasures are. They are pleasures springing from a sense of pardon; from a hope of mercy; from God's love shed abroad in the heart; from communion with Him; from confidence in his fatherly protection; from the consolations of his spirit; from a consciousness of being in Christ; from an increasing experience of his power and grace in the soul, struggling with our corruptions, and giving us the victory.

Now what can the man, who continues unhumbled, unbelieving, and unholy, know of these Pleasures? He feels not his sins, values not the Saviour, has no confidence towards God, nor desires to know a work of grace on his heart. In this state, it is not possible that he can taste the present pleasures of Religion. They are nothing to Him. He can see nothing in them, that he should desire them. He is a stranger to the peculiar happiness of the Gospel, and consequently has no share nor lot in the matter.

In the third place, till a man's heart be right with God, he can have no *Meekness for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness in the life to come*. The great end of the Gospel, is to fit men for heaven; to make them happy, by making them holy. Its main object is to produce in them that mind, and those dispositions, which will qualify them for enjoying the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. Now though we know but little of these heavenly pleasures, yet there are some things which are clearly represented as forming a considerable part of the happiness of the Saints in light. They see and serve God. They are with Jesus Christ, they behold his glory, and sing his praises. Thus

our Lord Himself, describing the Blessedness of the pure in heart, says that "they shall see God:" and in another place we read, that "his servants shall serve Him, and shall see his face." So also in that memorable intercession which Christ offered in behalf of his followers, He prays, as the completion of their happiness, "I will that they may be with me where I am, and behold my glory." Thus also St. John in his vision saw the whole multitude of redeemed sinners in heaven falling down before the Lamb, and singing a new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tongue, and kindred, and people, and nation." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and blessing." But if such be the happiness of Heaven, what share, what interest can *they* have in it, whose hearts are not right in the sight of God? How can the unhumbled, the unbelieving, and the unholy, find any pleasure in seeing and serving God: for they love Him not, and dislike His service? How can they find any pleasure in being with Jesus Christ, in beholding His glory, and ascribing to Him praise, and wisdom, and blessing; for they know nothing of Him, nor feel any love and gratitude to Him? Heaven then would not be Heaven to them. They have no taste for the happiness of it; no meetness for its blessed employments and delights; and consequently they have no part nor lot in the matter. We see then in what consists the *necessity* of the heart's being right with God.

Upon the whole, my brethren, let the following admonition be deeply impressed on your minds. Never think well of your state, nor be satisfied with your spiritual condition, till you have good reason for believing that your heart is right in the sight of God. Remember, that nothing will supply the want of this. A Christian name, a Christian education, a Christian profession, an apparent conversion, can profit you nothing without a Christian heart. So long as this is wanting, "you have no part nor lot in the matter." You are a stranger to real Christianity. You cannot trust in its precious *promises*. You cannot *spiritually* perform the duties which it enjoins. You know nothing of the *present* peace and happiness which it gives. You have no meetness for the *future* enjoyments to which it leads. Calling yourself a Christian, perhaps believing that you

have even a zeal for Christ, you are "yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."—Examine then and search your heart. Try it by the marks which have been set before you. See whether your prevailing views, dispositions, and desires be such as your situation and circumstances require them to be. Such as in a sinner under a dispensation of mercy they ought to be? See, whether you humbly condemn yourself: whether you truly believe in Jesus Christ: whether you anxiously long after holiness. Recollect for your encouragement, that the same Gospel, which enjoins this state of heart on all its followers, is able also to work it in them. It is the glory of the Gospel that it has power to renew and sanctify the soul, and to make it meet for heaven. The Holy Spirit is ready to produce repentance, faith, and holiness, in all who earnestly and diligently seek these blessings of Him. May you, my brethren, seek them in this manner? So shall your heart be right in the sight of God. So shall you have that part and lot in the matter, which shall never be taken away from you.

SERMON XXVI.

Importance of reflecting on our natural state of Guilt and Corruption.

ISAIAH, li. 1.

Hearken to me, Ye that follow after Righteousness; Ye, that seek the Lord. Look unto the Rock whence Ye are hewn, and to the Hole of the Pit, whence Ye are digged.

IT is a peculiar beauty and excellence in the Sacred Scriptures, and a proof of their divine original, as well as of the sameness of true religion under every dispensation, that what is addressed to the church at one period, is frequently no less applicable to it at another. The same admonitions, instructions, and consolations, which the Jewish Church received from the words of the Prophets, are

conveyed by their writings to the Christian Church: and in the one application are oftentimes no less profitable and appropriate, than they were in the other.—That such is the case with the passage which I have read for the text, I shall endeavor in this discourse, to shew.

These words were addressed by the prophet Isaiah, to the pious remnant of true believers among the Jews; for they are described as those who “follow after righteousness, and seek the Lord.” At this time, however, as it appears from the context, they were in an afflicted and a discouraged state. And such a state would be attended with its peculiar trials and temptations, and consequently, would stand in need of appropriate direction and support. What direction then does the Prophet give? What support does He point out to them? He calls them to the exercise of deep and serious reflection. He bids them candidly and closely to compare past things with present circumstances, and thus to see whether there was not ground for consolation and encouragement: for this is the meaning and object of the figurative exhortation in the text: “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye are digged.”—Was it on a public account that they were concerned? Were they grieved and discouraged at the depressed state of the church? Let them call to mind, how small its beginnings had been; how unpromising its commencement: when the Lord had “called Abraham alone,” a single individual, without any apparent prospect of issue, and yet had so blessed and increased him, that out of this Rock, the whole nation and church of Israel had been produced. Were their afflictions and discouragements of a private nature? Were they cast down under a sense of their own present trials and troubles? Let them reflect on their natural condition; on the state in which they had been found; on the way by which they had been led; “on the hole of the pit out of which they had been digged;” the depth of corruption, guilt, and misery from which they had been originally brought. If they were now built up “as lively stones,” in the spiritual temple of God; yet let them call to mind the rough materials out of which they had been formed, and the expence, and trouble, and time, which it had cost, to fit them for their present station. Reflections of this nature would tend to instruct and comfort them

under existing circumstances ; would point out their duty and minister consolation.

From this explanation of the text, I would deduce the following important Inference, namely, That it is the duty, and will be for the benefit of every true servant of God, occasionally to reflect, with due seriousness, on his own original state, on the rise and progress of religion in his own soul, and of the experience which he has thus individually had of the divine power, goodness, and mercy.

With a view to a practical application of this Inference, I shall endeavor more particularly

I. To point out the Persons here addressed.

II. To explain the Exhortation addressed to them.

I. The Persons addressed in the text, we have already observed, are the true servants of God : but in more particularly pointing them out, we must attend to the description here given of them. And in this description we shall perceive a striking illustration of the fact noticed above, namely of the sameness of true religion at all times, and under every dispensation. The persons here described are those, who "follow after righteousness, and seek the Lord."—Such were the true people of God under the Jewish Church. And how exactly does this description accord to the true people of God under the Christian Church ? How could they be more properly described, than as persons, who "follow after righteousness, and seek the Lord ?" Attend to the particulars of the description. They "seek the Lord."—The expression to *seek*, implies *desire*, and *endeavor*. The persons here spoken of *desire* to have the Lord for their God. They have in their judgments decidedly chosen Him for their portion ; and they long above all things to be at peace with Him, to walk with Him, to have communion with Him. Convinced that sin, if persisted in, must be their ruin ; that the world with all its allurements cannot make them happy ; that idols cannot profit them ; they have renounced all these vanities ; they have ceased to trust in them, and to be influenced by them. Their desire now is to obtain that peace, and happiness, and honor, which come from God only. It is the secret language of their hearts, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." "Whom have we in heaven but Thee ? And there is none upon earth that we desire besides Thee." And while they thus supremely de-

sire the favor of God, they anxiously and diligently endeavor to obtain it. They use the appointed means, in which God hath promised to reveal Himself to man. They wait upon Him in those ordinances, in which He is graciously to be found; in which He causes His Beauty and Glory to be seen; in which He gladdens the heart, and refreshes the Souls of those who search for Him.

But especially the Persons here spoken of, seek the Lord, by "following after righteousness." This is the other part of the Description. Righteousness in Scripture has a twofold meaning. It sometimes denotes that external Righteousness, which is imputed to the true believer in Christ, and in this sense it signifies Justification. At other times it refers to that internal Holiness, which is the work of the Spirit of Christ in the believer's heart, and in this sense it means Sanctification. In the passage before us, we may understand it in both these senses. Those who seek the Lord are following after Righteousness, both Justification and Sanctification; and following after them in the way, in which alone according to the covenant of mercy, these blessings are to be found. They are seeking them by Faith in Jesus Christ, in dependance on His promises, and through the power of His Spirit. Deeply convinced of their own guilt, and of their utter insufficiency to save themselves, they are looking for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life solely through the sufferings and obedience of Him, who was their Substitute and Surety. Their only hope of heaven is founded on His merits. They are earnestly longing with the Apostle St. Paul, "to win Christ, and to be found in Him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith." They are also following after holiness; that "holiness, without which, they know, that no man shall see the Lord." They hunger and thirst after Sanctification, no less than after Justification. While they desire to be "found in Christ," they also desire to "know Him and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." Sin, which they once loved and practised, and served, is now felt to be their burden, their shame, and their abhorrence; and to mortify and subdue it is their daily desire and constant aim. Taught by the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, they have

learned to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and under the influence of the Holy Spirit are living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Such are the true Servants of God: such they are now: such, according to the measure of light vouchsafed to them, they were in the Prophet's time. And such are the Persons described and addressed in the text,

I proceed,

II. To explain the Exhortation addressed to them.

This we have already seen is conveyed in figurative language; "Look unto the rock, whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye are digged." But the meaning is obvious, 'Look back unto yourselves. Consider what you once were; in what a depth of apostacy and misery you were originally sunk. Reflect on the natural hardness of your heart; on its insensibility to Spiritual Things; on its dreadful alienation from God. See this state of things exemplified,

First. In your original Conversion to God.

Secondly. In your subsequent Conduct towards Him.

1. Retrace in your memory the *Circumstances of your original Conversion* to God. Cannot you call to mind the time when you were "living without God in the world," walking in the flesh, and altogether carnally-minded? Perhaps you were living in the practice of gross sin; in the allowed indulgence of some unlawful passion, or in the immoderate gratification of some lawful appetite. Or if this were not exactly the case, you yet were making the world your God, devoted to its cares, its pleasures, or its honors, choosing to have your portion in it, and looking for your enjoyments from it. At any rate Self was your idol; the God, whom you served and worshipped, and were resolved to gratify. So that in some way or other you fell under the general description which St. Paul gives of mankind, as "children of disobedience; among whom also, (he pur-
sues,) we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others."* It may indeed have been, that you were not entirely without some apprehensions of God, nay, without some scriptural

* Ephes. ii. 3.

notions respecting Him, and the way of salvation : and possibly you even professed yourself his servant, and frequented his ordinances. But notwithstanding even this form of godliness, you are now sensible, that there was no *spirit* in it. You had no real *spiritual* views and apprehensions of God. No practical abiding impression was made on your heart. You saw not, you felt not that you were a lost and miserable sinner ready to perish ; who had no strength, or goodness of your own ; and must be saved, if saved at all, by omnipotent grace. You might perhaps allow that the Scriptures contained some statements of this kind. But every *personal* application of it to *yourself* you strongly resisted. Convictions of *your own* guilt and corruption and misery you would not admit : and as to spiritual, vital Religion, if you did not treat the mention of it with ridicule and reproach, yet you heard of it with indifference, or regarded it as delusion. Recollect whether in some such respects as these you did not evidence the hardness of your heart, its alienation from God, and its insensibility to heavenly and spiritual things.

And when the season of the Lord's mercy to you drew near ; when the Spirit of God, through the ministry of the word, began to dispel this darkness, and to impress new convictions on your mind : how often and how long did you resist these motions ! How slow were you in admitting the truths disclosed to you ! How unwilling to give up your own preconceived notions, your good opinion of yourself, your inward opposition to spiritual religion ! Was not the natural pride and unbelief of your heart at this period incontestably proved ? Though driven from one false foundation of hope, you had recourse to another. You tried every way of establishing your own righteousness, and of confirming your own peace ; till absolute necessity compelled you to flee for refuge to the hope of the Gospel, and to cast yourself perishing on the mercy of Christ. And even there how backward were you at believing his promises ! How distrustful of his word ! How long tossed, it may be, with doubts and fears, before you were brought confidently to take Him as your Saviour, and entirely to rely on his promises. Surely, in retracing the steps of your original Conversion to God (if they in any degree resemble those, which have

been described,) you must be strongly reminded of "the rock, whence you were hewn, and of the hole of the pit, whence you were digged."

See the same state of things exemplified,

2. *In your subsequent Conduct towards God.* Since the time in which you first knew Him in truth, and gave yourself up to serve Him in the Gospel of His Son, what has been the state of your heart, of its affections, its tempers, and its dispositions? Have all these been uniformly such, as this surrender and profession imply and require? Have there been no remaining corruptions, no lustings of the flesh, no reliëts of the old man still abiding and working in the soul? Have the members of the body of sin been *all* mortified? Has *every* offending limb been *totally* cut off? Has there been no perverseness in the will; no disaffection in the heart; no coldness in devotion; no backwardness in forming good resolutions; no tardiness in accomplishing them; no yielding to temptation; no failing in circumspection and watchfulness; no backsliding in practice; no revival of former sins; no returning to former habits; no desires after forbidden objects; no fear of man; no dread of the cross; no reluctance to encounter shame and reproach for Christ's sake? Alas, my brother, has there not on the contrary been too much of all these things? Retrace in your memory the Lord's dealings with you from the time you have known Him, and your conduct towards Him. What kindness, what goodness, what forbearance, what long-suffering on His part! What ingratitude, what distrust, what impatience, what provocation on your part! How small is the progress which you have made in holiness, compared with the means and opportunities which you have enjoyed! How dull have you been in understanding the truths and directions of Scripture: how slow in obeying them! When brought through your own folly or sin into circumstances of difficulty and danger, how prone have you been to quarrel with those very means, which the Lord's wisdom and mercy have devised for your deliverance! How often have you wandered from the fold, and but for the care of the Good Shepherd, would have perished for ever! See in this review of your Conduct the utter depravity of the natural heart, its alienation from God, its insensibility to spiritual things.

"Look unto the rock, whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye were digged."

From this view of the Persons described in the text and of the Exhortation addressed to them, I shall now proceed to make a practical application of the subject.

My Christian brethren, "ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord, look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye were digged."—Reflect on your deep apostacy from God; on the corruption of your nature; on the hardness of your heart, as illustrated in your original conversion to God, and in your subsequent conduct towards Him—and say, *What Lessons do these Reflections teach?*

Do they not inculcate *Humility*, and *Self-abasement*? Can you think seriously on these things, and not find your pride to be mortified and subdued? Call to mind that you were once in a state of hopeless misery, covered with guilt and exposed to ruin; but at the same time so blind that you saw not, that you suspected not your danger. But in this state the Lord freely made Himself known to you. He found you, when you sought Him not. You had done nothing to merit his favor, but much to provoke his wrath. Yet he had pity on you. He "brought you by a way that you knew not of. He led you in paths that you had not known. He made darkness light before you, and crooked things straight. These things He did unto you—and has not since forsaken you." Notwithstanding your many provocations He has not been weary of doing you good. Notwithstanding your negligences, and mistakes, and infirmities, He has not discarded you from his service. He still bears with you; employs you; accepts you; treats you with kindness; regards you with favor, and designs your happiness. Can you think on all this unmerited mercy; on all this undeserved, spontaneous loving-kindness to you, and not be filled with the deepest shame and humiliation of heart? Are you not ready to exclaim with Holy Job, "Behold I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes?"

Do not the same Reflections inculcate also and promote the Graces of *Patience*, *Contentment*, and *Resignation*? Was such indeed originally your lost condition? Was such your

state by nature and by practice? Have you partaken so much mercy? Have you been delivered, freely "without money, and without price" from so much misery? Have you even now so much ingratitude remaining in your heart? Are you oftentimes so rebellious, and at all times so unprofitable? Do you however *still* experience so much kindness, and daily receive so many blessings? Is this the case? And can you complain, and murmur, if in some respects your inclinations are crossed, and your desires unsatisfied? Surely murmuring and discontent become not you; *you*, who participate in so many unmerited gifts. "Look unto the Rock, whence you were hewn." Had it not been for the Lord's mercy, instead of being now a living stone in his spiritual building, you would still have been a part of that natural Rock, an unshaken mass of sin and unbelief. And after such distinguishing kindness can you object to the place which He has thought fit to assign to you in his edifice? Can you complain because He has not allotted to you a more elevated, a more conspicuous, or a more honorable station? "Look unto the pit, whence you were digged:" that pit, "in which there is no water;" and out of which the Lord has brought you by the blood of His covenant. Look at that pit of darkness and corruption. Compare it with the light, and life, and liberty, which you now enjoy; with the privileges vouchsafed to you, with the glory set before you; and after this review, after this comparison, can you feel dissatisfied with your lot? Surely you must rather exclaim with the Apostle "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content:" or with pious Eli, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

These Reflections teach also another lesson. They strongly inculcate the *Necessity of a continual dependance on divine grace* to work in you both to will and to do. Think on your original condition; on the state of sin and death, in which you were plunged, and in which you would still have continued to be plunged, had not the Spirit of God quickened you, and put into you spiritual life; had He not taken away the heart of stone, and given to you a heart of flesh; an humble, a tender, and an obedient heart. Think I say, on these things; and see how entirely you stand in need of the same spirit, to maintain the life which He first imparted. Without His quickening power you would to

this day have been dead in trespasses and sins. Without his preventing grace you are at this day unable to think or to do any thing that is good. He, who first inspired you with holy desires, must still inspire you with them. He who first taught you to pray in the Spirit must still teach you to pray in it. He who first enabled you to bring forth spiritual fruit, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, must still enable you.—Pray then for his help. Depend upon his grace. Undertake nothing in your own strength. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. So shall you be more than conquerors through Him that loveth you.

These Reflections have also a tendency to produce *Hope* and *Encouragement*. Perhaps you may at times be harassed with distressing apprehensions as to your true interest in Jesus Christ. Having some distinct perceptions of Christian Holiness, seeing what manner of persons true Christians ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, and comparing with this exalted standard your own defective attainments in holiness, you are ready to conclude that you are no real Christian. Finding so much evil remaining in your hearts, you are tempted to doubt, whether you were ever made a partaker of renewing grace. But at such seasons, “Look unto the Rock, whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the Pit, whence you were digged.” Call to mind your original state, the natural deadness of your heart to spiritual things. At that time you know nothing, you felt nothing, you desired nothing in respect to true, vital, spiritual religion. Compare your state *then* with your state *now*. Now you know what spiritual religion is. You have spiritual feelings, and desires. You long and endeavor after spiritual objects. Surely this is a sign of life. The dead feel not, desire not, strive not. Let these reflections allay your fears, and invigorate your hopes. Though you may as yet be only a babe in Christ; yet an infant as truly lives as a full grown man. Prove to yourself that you have life in you by seeking after the sincere milk of the word. Seek it and grow thereby. Prove to yourself that you are indeed a partaker of a new and holy nature, by following after holiness and walking in newness of life.

Such are some of the Lessons here suggested to those, who in the way which has been described, “follow after righteousness and seek the Lord.”

But the subject admits also of another less exclusive application. It furnishes one lesson of general importance: for it teaches us how holy and practical in its tendency is true, vital, evangelical Religion; that Religion, which beginning in a deep spiritual conviction of sin, leads to faith in Christ as the only source of peace, hope, and consolation, and the main spring of life and action. Religion thus described, is often encountered by prejudice, or regarded with suspicion, on the supposition that it tends to weaken the obligations to moral obedience, and to open a door to licentious and Antinomian consequences. Let, however, the use which has been made of the text shew how unreasonable are such prejudices, how erroneous are such suspicions. True, vital, evangelical Religion is closely and uniformly connected with personal holiness. So intimate is the union between them, that they can never be separated. Should any one *speculatively* suppose the contrary, it is evident that he is entirely unacquainted with the subject on which he professes to hold his opinion. Should any one *practically* conclude that such a separation is possible, it is as evident that he has never felt the power of true Religion on his Soul. Both shew their utter ignorance of the truth as it is in Jesus. Both shew the need they have of coming to Him as little children, that they may be taught of God; that being born again by the regenerating influences of his Spirit they may be brought experimentally to know, what it is to follow after righteousness, and to seek the Lord. Here is their remedy. Here, my Brethren, is your cure, your only cure, for these erroneous and distorted views of true Religion. Come humbly to Jesus Christ. Laying aside prejudice and self-conceit, cast yourselves before His throne of Mercy. Confess to Him your ignorance. Pray to Him for his Spirit to enlighten and convince you; to take of the things of Christ, and to shew them unto you. So shall you find rest unto your souls. He who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, will give to you. He will give you wisdom, even that wisdom which is from above; "the merchandize of which is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than of fine gold."—May the God of all grace and mercy incline your hearts to seek Him. May He lead you into all Truth, and bless you with all spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ!

SERMON XXVII.

God glorified in the Sufferings of Christ.

JOHN, xii. 28.

Father, glorify thy Name.

IN order justly to appreciate the character of an individual, attention must be paid to the peculiar circumstances in which he is placed. Excellences or defects in his conduct will be more or less conspicuous, in proportion as the advantages which he enjoys, or the difficulties with which he contends, are more clearly ascertained. Many minute particulars, which at first sight escape observation, may have, when discovered, a considerable share in determining the real merit of his pretensions ; may diminish his imaginary lustre, or diffuse around him a brighter radiance.

In contemplating the character of our Blessed Saviour, as delineated in the Gospel, we cannot but be struck with admiration at the unshaken fortitude which he uniformly displayed. But there was one circumstance, peculiar to himself, which, when duly noticed, places his fortitude in a far more elevated and interesting point of view. He was from the beginning exactly acquainted with every particular which would occur in his eventful life. Even at his first entrance on his ministry, he distinctly saw the miserable close, in which it would terminate : and, during the whole continuance of his laborious and unwearied exertions, he had constantly before his eyes the ignominy and sufferings which awaited him, the stripes and buffetings, the crown of thorns, the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion. When, therefore, with such objects present before him, we see him “ stedfastly setting his face to go up to Jerusalem ;” when with such a baptism to be baptized with, we hear him complaining of being “ straitened till it be accomplished ;” how greatly is our admiration of his fortitude increased ! Viewed under these circumstances, how transcendently glorious does his character appear ! At what an infinite dis-

tance does it remove all the celebrated examples of magnanimity, which history, sacred or profane, has proposed to the wonder and the imitation of mankind.

Nor was the fortitude which Jesus displayed, the result of insensibility ; of a mind destitute of the tender feelings of humanity. No. He partook of all the passive infirmities of our nature : so far as was consistent with the most spotless purity, he " was in all points tempted like as we are : " while he wept for others, he felt for himself ; and there were seasons, in which the apprehension of his sufferings, though it could not overwhelm his soul, weighed it down with the heaviest sorrow.

Such seasons, however, were transient, and served only to augment the glory of his character. An instance occurs in the passage connected with the text. Jesus, having spoken of his death, exclaims, " Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour ! " This was the prayer, which infirmity suggested. Human nature shrunk at the prospect of misery ; it would gladly have declined the bitter draught prepared for it.—But the influence of such feelings was momentary ; he dismisses the suggestion with abhorrence. " But for this cause came I unto this hour." And then, with collected firmness, and holy resignation, he consecrates himself to God, " Father, glorify thy Name."

This noble triumph of principle over feeling, of a sense of duty over the infirmity of nature, suggests many interesting and instructive reflections. But the point which I purpose to select for consideration, is the view which Jesus here gives of his death, as connected with the glory of God. He represents the divine glory as about to derive additional lustre from his sufferings, " Father, glorify thy Name." As if he had said, ' Father, to glorify thy Name is the work which I have freely undertaken ; the object which I have steadfastly kept in view. For this cause came I unto this hour. Shall I now recede from my purpose ? Far be such a thought ! Since the attainment of this glorious object can be accomplished only by my obedience unto death, I devote myself to this service. " If this cup cannot pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." '

In discoursing on this important subject, I shall proceed to shew,

I. What is meant by God's Name being glorified.

II. How God's Name is glorified by the sufferings and death of Christ.

I. The Name of God includes all which at present we know of God. "He is a spirit. No man hath seen him at any time." His Name comprehends those infinite perfections, by which he has revealed himself to us in his works and in his word. In the manifestation of these perfections consists his glory. When Moses besought the Lord, saying, "Shew me thy glory," he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee."* And what was the Name proclaimed, but a declaration of his essential perfections, and glorious attributes? "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty."† To glorify, then, the Name of God, is to manifest his infinite perfections. Whatever tends more illustriously to display these infinite perfections, exalts his character, and augments the glory of his Name.

Thus the works of creation and of providence conspire to increase the divine glory, by shewing forth the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of him who made, contrived, and upholds them. "His eternal power and godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. The heavens declare the glory of God. All thy works praise thee, O Lord." The terrible judgments likewise which God executes on the wicked, are so many accessions to his glory, by displaying in a signal manner, the holiness of his character, the righteousness of his government, and the truth of his word. When he brought in the flood of waters upon the world of the ungodly: when he destroyed the wicked cities of the plain by fire and brimstone out of heaven: when he caused the earth to open, and to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—what glorious manifestations did these awful events exhibit of his holy hatred of sin, and of the irresistible strength of his arm? What is the language which the Almighty himself employs, when predicting the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea? "I

* Exodus, xxxiii. 19. † Exodus, xxxiv. 6, 7.

will get me honor upon Pharaoh and upon all his host.”* What is the language which Moses employs in celebrating this tremendous display of divine vengeance? “Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee; thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”†

But farther, let it be remembered, that in order to glorify the Name of God, it is requisite, not only that his infinite perfections be manifested, but that they be manifested in full harmony and agreement with each other. To exalt one of his great attributes at the expense of another would be not to augment, but to diminish his glory. Should his mercy, for instance, be dispensed in such a manner, as to make it appear that he was less than perfectly holy, just, and true, his character, instead of being magnified, would be rendered less glorious. God must be infinite in all his attributes. One must not be restrained by another. One must not encroach upon another. All must agree together. All must be exercised together without interference or disorder. And, in proportion as this harmony of the divine perfections is more conspicuously displayed, the Name of God appears more glorious.

II. I proceed to shew how God's Name is glorified by the sufferings and death of Christ. The death of Christ was shameful and accursed: for “cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree.”‡ His sufferings before his death were multiplied and excessive. He suffered both in body and in soul; by the hand of man, and by the hand of God. Not only were the malice and fury of the Jews and Romans combined against him; not only were the powers of darkness let loose upon him; but it also “pleased the Lord to bruise him,” and to “afflict him in the day of his fierce anger.” No sorrow was ever like his sorrow. But how was the Name of God glorified in his sorrow? How were the infinite perfections of the Godhead manifested in the awful spectacle which Gethsemane and Calvary exhibited? Had Jesus been

* Exodus, xiv. 17.

† Exodus, xv. 6, 7. 11.

‡ Gal. iii. 13.

a sinner, the divine justice and holiness might have been displayed in the sufferings which he endured. God might have been glorified in executing upon him the punishment which he had incurred. But Jesus was not a sinner: "he had done no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth. The prince of this world had no part in him." Though he suffered more than any other man ever suffered; yet, unlike to all the rest of mankind, he deserved not to have suffered at all. How then was God glorified in his sufferings. We should have thought that it would have redounded more to the glory of God to have interposed in his behalf; to have rescued him from danger; to have poured vengeance on his adversaries,

Shall we remove this difficulty, by saying that he suffered for others; that he endured the wrath of God, and the pains of the cross, not for his own sins, but for the sins of the world? But how was God "glorified" by such a substitution? We will allow that his mercy towards sinners might be shewn in admitting another to suffer in their stead; but what shall we say of his holiness! Would not this perfection suffer loss by such an exchange, and appear less glorious? Would God's holy hatred of sin be displayed so clearly in the temporary sufferings, however great, of one righteous individual, as in the everlasting misery and destruction of a whole world of sinners? Would the former spectacle have afforded an exhibition equally awful with the latter, of the holiness of God's character, and of the righteousness of his moral government? Consider with yourselves, my brethren: bring home the question to your own experience. Behold, on the one hand, an innocent man undergoing all the agonies which Jesus underwent. Contemplate, on the other, millions of wretched spirits plunged into that lake of torment, where the worm never dieth, and the fire is never quenched. Which sight affects you most? In which is the holy character of God most clearly seen? Does not the latter confessedly fill you with the greatest dread of sin, and with the most awful thoughts of the divine perfections? How then can God be glorified in the vicarious sufferings of Christ for sinners, when those sufferings display his glorious attributes less clearly, than the sufferings of sinners in their own persons would display them? With what truth could Jesus represent his death as conducive to the divine glory?

To solve this difficulty, another consideration must be added. What was the person of this sufferer? Who was this Son of Man, of whose sufferings we are speaking? In all our apprehensions of suffering, the station and dignity of the sufferer are circumstances of no inconsiderable importance. The same degree of suffering, when undergone by a person of rank and eminence, appears to us far greater, and excites our pity far more, than when undergone by a person of inferior condition. Suffering royalty is an object, which calls forth our deepest commiseration. Again, the more exalted a person's rank may be, the more striking is any disgrace which may befall him; the more exemplary any punishment which may be inflicted on him. Should the son of a king be brought to expiate by his life the crimes which he had committed, far different would be the sensations occasioned by such a spectacle, than if it were a subject only, who was condemned to die. The station of the criminal would impress on all beholders the most awful conviction of the inflexible justice of his father, and of the honor which he put upon his law. Apply these remarks to the case before us. What was the dignity of Jesus? He was the Son of Man; but he was also the Son of God: the only begotten Son of God by an eternal generation: equal to, and one with the Father: who himself made the worlds: King of kings, and Lord of lords: whom all the angels of God worship. Such was this sufferer; such was the excellence of his person, the dignity of his rank. Here then our difficulty ceases; here we discover how God was glorified in the sufferings of his Son. That such a great and illustrious person should come into this world; should take upon him the likeness of sinful flesh; be treated with all possible indignity by his own rebellious creatures; endure the wrath of the Father; and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! That he should experience all these sufferings, as the surety and substitute for sinners! What profound views does this representation afford of the exceeding sinfulness of sin! How tremendously does it declare the honor of the divine law, when nothing but the blood of the Son of God could atone for the violation of it! How loudly does it proclaim the awful justice of God, which required such a sacrifice! Not ten thousand worlds, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, could have exhibited in

such striking colors the holiness of the divine character, as this stupendous spectacle of the Son of God hanging on the cross for sinners, and making his soul an offering for sin.

But farther, the cross of Jesus was not only the most signal exhibition of the justice and holiness of God ; it was also the brightest and most glorious display of his love and mercy. 'Thus it is universally represented in Scripture— "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* How can we better judge of the strength of that love which a person feels for us, than by the sacrifices which he makes in our favor ? The greater and more expensive are his exertions on our account, the stronger and more ardent we deem his affection for us. What manner of love then must the Father have bestowed on us ? How tenderly did his bowels yearn over our lost condition, seeing, that he hath not withheld from us his Son, his only Son ! that when no easier way could be devised of reconciling sinners to himself, he freely gave him up for us all ; Contemplate the transcendent excellence of the person of Christ ; and then reflect, what must have been the depth and height of divine love, which could have planned and executed so vast a scheme for our redemption. Does not the cross of Christ set forth the tender mercies of God in the most brilliant light, and shew that the riches of his grace are beyond all conception great and wonderful ?

Again, the death of Jesus, "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," not only exhibits, in a glorious manner the divine perfections, when singly and separately examined, but displays them altogether in one grand comprehensive view ; shows us the most opposite attributes of God, entirely glorious in themselves, yet acting and exercised together in perfect harmony and concert. Infinite justice, and infinite love thoroughly reconciled. "Mercy and truth met together. righteousness and peace kissing each other." God glo-

* John, ii. 16. 1 John, iv. 9, 10.

rious in holiness; yet no less glorious in mercy; "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty.—A just God and yet a Saviour.—Just and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Here then we perceive how God is glorified in the sufferings of Christ. Here we discover the full meaning of our Lord's expression in the text, "Father, glorify thy Name." For in no other point of view are the infinite perfections of God so illustriously displayed. In no other revelation of himself does his character appear so perfectly and completely glorious. Hence is the Gospel called the "glorious Gospel,—in which as in a glass we behold the Glory of the Lord." Hence are we said to receive "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*" Hence the astonished angels, when first they beheld this stupendous display of the divine perfections in the person of Emanuel, sang, "Glory to God in the highest."

What are the practical reflections which result from the discussion of this interesting subject? Is God glorified in the sacrifice of Christ? My brethren, beware how you venture to build on any other foundation, than the one, which is thus provided for you. Beware how you presume, by any attempted extenuation of your guilt, by any imaginary exaltation of your own righteousness, to diminish the importance, or virtually to deny the necessity of that infinite sacrifice. Every scheme of religion, which tends to depreciate the value of Christ's sufferings, tends in exact proportion to dishonor God, and to sully the lustre of the divine perfections. The only way of salvation, which is at once suited to the wants of man, and conducive to the glory of God, is a simple reliance on the merits and atonement of the Son of God. Examine every other ground of hope, and you will find that it is built on very defective and unworthy conceptions of the divine character. Religious systems of human invention have invariably been founded on the supposition, that God is "such a one as ourselves." Every departure from the simplicity of Christianity has originated from the same source. Mankind, deriving their notions of perfection, not from the Scriptures, but from their own corrupt imaginations, create to themselves a being, whom they dig-

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

nify with the name of God, and place on Jehovah's throne. But how unlike to the glorious Being, whom they design to represent! Stripped of those essential attributes, his justice, his holiness, and his truth, he is too compassionate to punish sin, too much concerned for the happiness of his creatures to regard his own honor and to fulfil his word. His benevolence degenerates into weakness. His mercy tolerates and almost encourages iniquity. Such is the God of their idolatry. But is such, my brethren, the God whom the Bible reveals? Look at the sufferings of Christ, and learn the true character of God. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." If God be not the terrible avenger of sin, what brought the Son of God to hang upon the cross? If you flee not to that cross for refuge, how will you escape the vengeance, which your sin has provoked? God will not lose his glory. Those infinite perfections, which you refuse to glorify by faith in Christ, will be glorified in your everlasting destruction. Lay hold then of the hope set before you. In an awful conviction of the glorious majesty, in an humble submission to the will of God, resign yourselves, both body and soul, into the hands of Christ. Let the language of your hearts be, "Father, glorify thy Name."

To every sinner, who thus feels his need of the mercy of the Gospel, the subject which we have been contemplating, speaks consolation and encouragement. You are sensible that you are an offender. You are filled with doubts and fears as to your acceptance with God. The divine perfections seem armed against you. The glory of God demands the punishment of so heinous a transgressor. Look at the cross of Christ. Behold God more glorified in the sufferings of Emanuel, than he can be glorified in your everlasting sufferings. See sin laid upon the surety; the wrath of God appeased; his justice satisfied; his law magnified; his holiness proclaimed; his mercy offered to the chief of sinners, in perfect unison with all his other glorious attributes. Dismiss your unreasonable fears. Be not faithless but believing. Believe in Christ for salvation, and doubt not your pardon and acceptance. Your faith in Christ will reflect a greater glory on God than the most exemplary punishment, which you can undergo. The very perfections at which you tremble, will be engaged to ensure your pardon. God will not punish sin in you, and in your surety

also. He *will be* just "to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness."* Every penitent sinner, who puts his trust in Christ alone for peace and pardon, furnishes matter for renewed acclamations of praise and joy to the angels which surround the throne of God. He is another jewel added to the Redeemer's crown; another monument of the riches of his grace; another instrument to the glory of God's Name throughout eternity. Let these reflections inspire you with confidence. Be your sins as scarlet, be they red like crimson, through the merits of Christ they shall become as white as snow. The blood of Jesus is an all-sufficient atonement, for it is the blood of God himself. Wash then in this "fountain which he has opened for sin, and for uncleanness." And thus prepare yourself for joining that glorious multitude, which no man can number, who, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, crying with a loud voice and saying, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.—For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and hast made us unto God kings and priests for ever and ever."

Lastly, Are you built on this one foundation? Have you fled for refuge to this hope set before you? Are you trusting to the sacrifice of Christ for acceptance with God? Are these your professions? Live suitably to the character which you assume. Prove the sincerity of your professions, by the holiness of your conduct. The spectacle exhibited on the cross imperiously enforces the apostle's exhortation, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."† Did the Son of God make his soul an offering for sin, that you might indulge in sin? Did he die for the ungodly, that you might continue ungodly? Did he glorify the divine perfections by his sufferings, that you might dishonor them in your lives? You cannot for a moment entertain such presumptuous notions. Why are you depending for salvation on a crucified Saviour? Because God is an Holy God. If he were not an Holy God, who will not behold iniquity, you would stand in need of no atonement. Will he, then, countenance, will he tolerate wil-

* John, i. 9. † 2 Tim. ii. 19.

ful unholiness in you? On sinners penitent and humble, he will multiply pardons; but against sinners obstinately impenitent, his wrath will burn like fire for ever. Be not deceived. If unmortified lusts, if unsanctified tempers reign in you, you are not a true believer in Christ. You have no well-grounded hope of eternal life. For "every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as Christ is pure."*—Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump.—As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

SERMON XXVIII.

Scriptural statement of the Doctrine of Justification.

ROMANS, iii. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

OF all the objects which can engage our attention, salvation is confessedly the most important. Nay, it is our only concern of real importance; for a failure here will be attended with consequences so dreadful, that it would have been far better for us never to have been born. With what earnestness should this reflection animate us in seeking

* 1 John, iii. 3.

the way of salvation ; with what joyfulness in finding it ; with what diligence in following it ! Blessed, indeed, be God ! the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation. They mark the way so plainly, that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Whence comes it, then, that so many perish with the word of God in their hands ? Because it is "not mixed with faith in them that hear it." Because men, professing to believe the Scriptures, too often refuse to be instructed by them, and are wise above what is written. May the good Spirit of our God direct and humble our hearts, while we proceed to the consideration of that highly momentous passage, which I have chosen for the text !

The leading design of St. Paul, in this part of his epistle, is to explain and illustrate the great doctrine of Justification. In the first chapter, he had declared that the manifestation of this important doctrine was both the object and the glory of that Gospel which he preached : "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith :"
therein is fully disclosed that method, which infinite Wisdom has devised for accounting sinners righteous ; that method by which God, in the very act of justifying the ungodly, proclaims his own essential righteousness. Accordingly, the apostle, having proved the universal guilt both of Jews and Gentiles, and consequently the impossibility of their justifying themselves before God, introduces that comprehensive description of the method revealed in the Gospel, to which I purpose, on the present occasion, to lead your attention.

With a view of prosecuting this design,

I. I shall briefly explain the nature and importance of Justification.

II. I shall shew the method of Justification revealed in the Gospel, as it may be collected from the several leading particulars stated in the text.

I. The grand and sole object of the Gospel, considered with respect to mankind, is to provide suitable means of deliverance out of that state into which sin has plunged the human race. To understand, then, and to appreciate the nature and the importance of the means provided, regard must be paid to the particulars of that state from which deliverance is proposed to be effected. This state may be contemplated as two-fold ; as a state of guilt, and as a state of cor-

ruption. A state of guilt, which exposes the sinner to the penal consequences of sin : a state of corruption, which incapacitates him for the enjoyment of heavenly glory. This is a distinction which, for the sake of precision in discussing doctrinal subjects, cannot be too frequently pointed out, and too constantly kept in view ; a distinction, from want of proper attention to which, much ambiguity and misunderstanding in discussions of this nature continually originate. This has especially been the case with respect to the doctrine before us. Not adverting with sufficient clearness to this two-fold state of the sinner, persons have confounded the means provided for delivering him from the punishment of sin with those devised for delivering him from the power of it. They have not preserved that due discrimination, which in order to a clear comprehension of the subject, must ever be preserved, between a *till* to heaven and a *fitness* for enjoying it ; between the sinner's Justification and his Sanctification. Let it then be plainly premised, in the commencement of the present discussion, that Justification has respect to the state of the sinner solely as he is *guilty*. Sin is the transgression of the divine law, which, like every other law, denounces vengeance on those who violate it. The sinner no sooner transgresses the commandment than he becomes subject to all the penal consequences of transgression. Execution may for a season be deferred ; but sentence is gone forth ; and merited punishment finally awaits him. What that punishment, what that sentence is, the Scriptures fully state. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die.—The wages of sin is death : " an eternal separation from the presence of Him, in whose favor is life : the everlasting destruction of body and soul in hell, " which is the second death."* Here, then, the nature and the importance of the doctrine under consideration are easily discerned. Justification includes a complete absolution from all these penal consequences of sin. It implies a transition from this state of guilt and wrath to a state of grace and pardon ; nay, not to a state of grace and pardon only, but to a state of perfect reconciliation and acceptance. The sinner, being justified, has peace with God. Not only are his sins " that are past " so entirely remitted, that, in the expressive language of Scripture, they " shall be

* Ezek. xviii. 4. Rom. vi. 23. Rev. xxi. 8.

remembered no more ;" they are "all cast into the depths of the sea ;" they "shall be sought for, and there shall be none ; they shall not be found ;"* but though unrighteous in himself, he is treated as if he were righteous. He is invested with all the privileges to which a righteous person would be entitled. No longer accounted a transgressor of the divine law, he is adopted into the family of God. He is "a dear son, a pleasant child : " and "if a child, then an heir, an heir of God," and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Such is the glorious change which Justification effects in the state of a sinner. His guilt is removed. His person is accepted. His reconciliation with his offended God is accomplished. Can any doubt exist of the importance of this doctrine ? Can any more interesting subject be submitted to our consideration, than a discussion of the means by which this glorious change is produced ? To this discussion let our thoughts be now directed.

II. "The righteousness of God," or that method which the Gospel reveals for the justification of the sinner, may be collected from the several leading particulars stated in the text.

1. The righteousness of God is "without the law." Taken in conjunction with the preceding verse, and with the whole of the apostle's argument throughout the former part of this epistle, the law must here be understood, primarily, to imply the moral law, by which "is the knowledge of sin : " though, so far as the Jewish people were concerned, the ceremonial law, which was to them a revelation of the divine will, may also be included. But the righteousness of God is "without the law." The Justification of a sinner has no connection with his own personal obedience either to the moral or the ceremonial law. In the act of his Justification his own performances are not taken into the account. The very idea of a transgressor of the law being justified by his *past* obedience to the law is a palpable absurdity, and a contradiction in terms. While his *future* obedience not only is the effect, and therefore cannot be the cause, of his Justification ; but, being at the best imperfect, itself stands in need of forgiveness, and consequently must for ever be excluded from the office of justifying. Hence it is so frequent-

* Jer. xxxi. 34. Micah, vii. 19. Jer. i. 20.

ly asserted, in the writings of the apostle; when speaking on this point, that a man is not justified "by works; by the deeds of the law; by the works of the law."* This truth will more fully appear from another particular stated in the text.

2. The righteousness of God is "freely by his grace: For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace." "Now" as the apostle argues in another place, "to him that worketh is the reward, not of grace, but of debt;" and again, "if it be by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace."† The very notion of grace necessarily excludes all intermixture of works. For what is grace, but a free, unbought, unmerited exercise of mercy? Such is the act of a sinner's Justification, so far as relates to himself. It springs from the exceeding riches of God's grace. It has no respect to meritorious services, on the one hand; nor is it influenced by mercenary views, on the other. It is not bestowed as a reward for any past performances, nor does it look for a compensation from future obedience. God justifies the sinner freely: imputes to him righteousness without works; which is therefore stiled "the gift of righteousness; the free gift of many offences unto Justification."‡

But if God thus account the sinner to be righteous, what shall we say of his own essential righteousness? It is expressly stated in the text, that "to declare the righteousness of God" is one important end of this revealed method of Justification. But how can this important end be attained by God's freely imputing righteousness without works? Can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? To this objection, the next particular to be adduced furnishes a complete reply.

3. The righteousness of God is "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

While God freely justifies the sinner, in the very channel by which He communicates this blessing, He makes full provision for the honor of his own perfections. He "set forth a propitiation," which proclaims in the most signal manner his awful justice, holiness, and truth. He sends his own Eternal Son into the world, to become the substitute of

* Rom. iii. 20. 28. Gal. ii. 16. † Rom. iv. 4. xi. 6. ‡ Rom. v. 16, 17.

sinner; to bear their sins in his own body on the tree; and thus to make his soul an offering for sin. The Eternal Son consents: "takes upon him the form of a servant, and is made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbleth himself, and becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* With this sacrifice, God declares himself well pleased; and, for the sake of his Incarnate Son, bestows remission of sin, the gift of righteousness, on his guilty creatures. This is "the redemption which is in Jesus Christ;" this is the ransom paid for sinners, even "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The voluntary humiliation and perfect obedience unto death, of the Son of God, constitute the *meritorious* cause of the sinner's justification. Hence it is said, that we are "justified by his blood;" that "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" that "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."†

But is every sinner alike justified? Is righteousness actually imputed to all without exception? Is no distinction made? Is there no previous disposition requisite for the participation of this glorious privilege? To this inquiry the next particular provides an answer.

4. The righteousness of God is "by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe."

Faith is that previous disposition requisite to which the promises are made. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that *believe* are justified from all things, from which they could not have been justified by the law of Moses.‡ God hath sent forth his Son to be a propitiation through *faith* in his blood." Hence the righteousness of God is so frequently called the "righteousness of faith; the righteousness which is of God by faith."§ Indeed, if justification be not by works, it must be by faith. "Therefore," argues the apostle, "it is of faith that it might be by grace."|| If righteousness be imputed to the sinner, without any respect to his own personal merits and performances, it can be conferred in no other way but "un-

* Phil. ii. 7, 8. † Rom. v. 9, 19. 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡ Acts, xlii. 38, 39. § Rom. iv. 13. Phil. iii. 9. || Rom. iv. 16.

to all, and upon all them that believe." For what is the faith here meant, but a cordial acceptance of the proffered mercy, a hearty acquiescence in this revealed method of Justification? The gift of righteousness is freely offered to all. Faith is the hand which receives, applies, and appropriates the gift. "Christ came unto his own, and his own received him not: but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."* God, in the fulness of his love, proclaims himself ready to confer the glorious privilege of Justification on every sinner who is willing to accept it. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."† None can be saved in any other way; "for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." None, on the other hand, who embrace this offer, shall be rejected. Who, then, embrace this offer? Those who believe the declarations of the Almighty, and "set to their seal that God is true." Those who submit to be "saved by grace through faith," and condescend to accept "eternal life as the gift of God." The sinner, hearing the glad message of reconciliation, relies upon it, as the word of Him, who cannot lie; renounces all other grounds of dependance; confides in the promises given to him through Jesus Christ; and thus gradually finds his guilty fears and doubts removed. "With the heart he believeth unto righteousness;" and "believing, he rejoiceth with joy unspeakable and full of glory." There is yet one further particular to be noticed.

5. The righteousness of God was "witnessed by the law and the prophets."

This method of justifying the sinner was no new discovery. It was now manifested. By the preaching of the Gospel, the knowledge of it was more clearly revealed, and more widely diffused. But, from the first intimation of mercy, the way of reconciliation between God and the sinner had ever continued the same. The original promise of the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head, virtually comprehended the substance of that doctrine which the apostle in this passage so fully unfolds. "Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness."‡ The rites and sacrifices of the ceremoni-

* John, i. 11, 12. † Isaiah, lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17. ‡ Gen. xv. 6.

al law represented and prefigured the same method of justification. The offerers, by typically transferring their guilt upon the innocent victims, were taught to look for remission and acceptance by faith in the blood of that Lamb of God, who should take away the sin of the world. Every additional disclosure of the spirituality, the extent, and the awful sanctions of the moral law, bore testimony to "the righteousness of God which is by faith," by confirming the impossibility of a sinner's being justified by the works of the law. The prophets testified the same truth. "To Christ give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."* When Isaiah declares, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory: By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many:" When Jeremiah, speaking of the righteous Branch, whom the Lord should raise up to the house of David, adds, "And this is his name, whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness:" When the prophet Habakkuk asserts, that "The just shall live by his faith:"† In these, and numerous other passages, which might be adduced, they bear witness to that method of justification, which is revealed in the Gospel "from faith to faith;" which no longer enveloped beneath typical representations and obscure predictions, is written in characters so plain, that "he may run, which readeth it:" Justification by faith only, through the mercies of God and the merits of our great Redeemer.

Such, my brethren, is the righteousness of God. Such is the method, which infinite wisdom has revealed for the Justification of a sinner; a method, at once so reasonable and excellent in itself, so conducive to the glory of God, so accommodated to the necessities of man, that it challenges universal acceptance, and leaves the sinner, who rejects it, without excuse.

But does it meet with that universal acceptance to which it is entitled? Is this doctrine received, embraced, valued in a manner proportionate to its great importance? What is the case with ourselves? Have we "fled for refuge to lay hold of this hope set before us?" Under a deep conviction of our vileness, our apostacy, and our guilt, have we abandoned every idea of justifying ourselves, in the whole

* Acts, x. 43. † Isaiah, xlv. 25. Hil. 11. Jer. xxxiii. 6. Hab. ii. 4.

your sins. How repeatedly have you violated the *letter* of this most holy law, by doing what it prohibits, by leaving undone what it enjoins? How incessantly have you violated the *spirit* of it? Nay, when did you ever fully comply with its spiritual injunctions? In numberless instances you have evidently broken its precepts. Even in those things in which you have appeared to obey them, has your obedience been such as is required? In all your best actions, in all your seeming compliances with the divine commands, have you been actuated supremely by love to God, and by regard to his glory? Have not many selfish, inferior, unworthy motives continually interfered? Recollect, if you are able, that one single day, throughout which you have preserved, in the outward and in the inward man, a perfect conformity to the letter and the spirit of the divine law. Recollect, if you are able, that one single transaction of your life, which you could call upon the holy God to witness as being free, both in the motive and in the execution, from any mixture of selfishness and impurity.

Weighed in these balances (and they are the balances of the sanctuary,) you must be found wanting. Measured by this standard, far from having a righteousness of your own, commensurate to the demands of the law, you cannot but feel that you are miserably defective. You are "all as an unclean thing: and all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags."* Thus circumstanced, will you refuse the gift of righteousness? Will you reject the offer of that wedding-garment, in which alone you can be worthy to partake of the marriage-supper of the Lamb? Deal not so unwisely. Look forward to the time, when, if you shall have persisted in this refusal, you will be *speechless* before God, and the assembled universe. Have mercy on your own souls. "We pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God.—As workers together with him, we beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." No longer treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. Cast away the weapons of your fruitless warfare. "Submit yourselves unto God.—Take hold of his strength, that you may make peace with him, and you shall make peace with him."

But there may be some who deeply feel their need of the gift of righteousness; who earnestly long for the possession

* Isaiah, lxiv. 6.

of it, but who, from a sense of their exceeding sinfulness, distrust their title to it. 'Reconciliation,' they cry, 'with our offended God is the blessing which we most fervently desire. But it is a blessing, of which at present we are utterly unworthy: a blessing, to which under our load of guilt we cannot venture to aspire: a blessing for which we must be content to wait, till we are more fitted for receiving it.' Such is their language. But whence do these sentiments arise? They have "a shew of humility;" but at the bottom they spring from the suggestions of natural pride, which still lurks within. My brethren, if you maintain these sentiments, the cause is manifest. You have not yet entirely dismissed the idea of merit in the sinner. You have not eradicated the notion so firmly implanted in the natural heart, that the Almighty, in dispensing his favors, is influenced by a regard to some antecedent worthiness in his creatures. But what say the Scriptures? "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* Where is this antecedent worthiness to be obtained? If your guilt is now so great as to incapacitate you for receiving the gift of righteousness, when will it be sufficiently diminished? If you are now unfit for participating the grace of God, how will you be rendered fit? Admit, that from this moment you so entirely reform your heart and life, as never in a single instance to add to your present numberless transgressions; yet such a reformation cannot make the number of those transgressions less. Future obedience, even if perfect, cannot atone for the guilt, cannot purchase the remission of the sins that are past. An unfailling compliance with the most rigorous demands of the law for the time to come, cannot cancel the debt of ten thousand talents, already contracted. Dismiss such vain pretensions. Your debt, your unworthiness, your guilt, will never become less by any method of your own devising. Every attempt will but augment and aggravate them. Accept the blessing, which is freely offered to you: offered, not because you are *worthy* to receive it; but because you are utterly unworthy; because "where sin hath abounded, there grace has much more abounded."† Say

* Isaiah, lv. 8, 9. † Rom. v. 20.

not, 'my sins are so great, that the blessing can never be designed for me.' Shall the beggar urge his poverty as a reason why he should not be relieved? Shall he say, 'when I am less in want, then I shall be a fitter object of your bounty?' The sick did not desist from applying to Jesus for a cure, till by other means they had checked the progress, or had abated the violence of their disorders. The prodigal did not forbear from returning to his father, till he had first qualified himself for appearing before him in a more becoming and suitable condition. Had they acted on this principle, the diseased would have remained without a cure. The prodigal would have miserably perished. Follow these examples. Apply without delay to your spiritual Physician. "Have mercy on us, thou Son of David." He has grace and power to heal your guilty soul. "His blood cleanseth from all sin." Arise and go to your heavenly Father. Say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He will run to meet you. He will stop your self-reproaches with tokens of his mercy. He will forgive you freely. He will put on you the best robe, the robe of righteousness. He will invest you with all the privileges of a son. "He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in his love; He will joy over you with singing.—For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

SERMON XXIX.

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith only, Vindicated from the Charge of Encouraging Licentiousness.

ROMANS, iii. 31.

Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law.

IN a former discourse, I explained that method which infinite wisdom has revealed for the Justification of a sinner. On the present occasion, I purpose to direct our

attention to the practical effects of this leading doctrine of the Gospel.

So early as the days of the apostle, we find from the text, that there were persons, who represented this doctrine as unfavorable to the interests of morality. They objected to the preachers of Justification by faith only, that they "made void the law." This charge the apostle most strenuously denies. He solemnly protests against any such inference as deducible from his doctrine; and contends that it furnishes a conclusion of a very opposite tendency. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

In the subsequent ages of the church, objections of a similar nature have repeatedly been urged against the doctrine in question. And though their futility has been repeatedly exposed, yet even in the present times they are not seldom advanced with an air of confident assurance, as if they had never been advanced before, or were incapable of being refuted. It is presumed, then, that a particular discussion of this point will prove neither an unseasonable nor an unprofitable employment. Accordingly I shall consider,

I. The objection, that faith makes void the law.

II. The assertion, that faith establishes the law.

I. It is objected to the doctrine of Justification by faith only, that it "makes void the law;" that it renders the moral law useless and nugatory: and thus eventually tends to introduce and encourage licentiousness and sin. The charge is of a most serious nature; and, if substantiated, must doubtless prove an insuperable bar to the admission of the doctrine; for it would prove that the doctrine could not be the doctrine of Scripture. But it is contended, on the other hand, that no such objection can reasonably be urged; that faith does not make void the law. Let the examination of this question obtain that dispassionate attention, to which from its great importance it is entitled.

The moral law is that rule to which we are obliged to conform. This obligation arises from our relation to God, as rational creatures. Subjects of his universal empire, we are bound to obey, according to our capacities, and the end of our being, the law of that universal empire. From this obligation, no lapse of time, no change of place or of circumstances, can set us free. It is an obligation founded on

the nature of things, which nothing ever can dissolve. Should a doctrine then, professing to be from God, tend, in its legitimate consequences, to warrant an inference that any obligation of this kind had not hitherto existed, or might hereafter in any proportion be relaxed; such a tendency would in itself disprove the pretensions of the doctrine to divine authority, and would constitute sufficient grounds for rejecting it as false and spurious; as an invention of man, an erroneous deduction from the word of God. But such is not the tendency of the doctrine in question. No inference of this nature can be fairly drawn from it. On the contrary, the pre-supposed existence of man's obligation to obey the moral law, is one part of the foundation on which this doctrine stands. There would have been no occasion for devising a method of delivering him from the penal effects of offences committed against the law, but on the supposition of his antecedent obligation to obey the law. The very circumstance, of a provision being made for remitting the condemning power, establishes the previous obligatory power of the law. And does reconciliation with God diminish this obligation to obey him? Is the sinner less bound to render obedience, when he is pardoned and taken into favor, than when he was in a state of guilt and under the sentence of the law? Surely no such conclusion can be reasonably deduced from the doctrine of Justification by faith only. So far, then, as the *obligation* to obedience is concerned, the charge alleged is destitute of proof; "Faith does not make void the law."

Examine whether in respect to the *measure* of the required obedience the objection stands on more substantial grounds. The law of God is holy, just, and good: a transcript of the mind of its glorious author, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." This law requires universal, unswerving obedience. It reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart. It abates not for the shortest interval of its strictest demands. It makes no allowance for human imperfections, for inadvertency, or surprise. It accounts every, the slightest deviation from its tenor, to be sin. In a word, it is satisfied with nothing short of a perfect conformity, both in body and soul, to all its extensive and spiritual injunctions. Such is the moral law. Should any interpretation then of Scripture be advanced, which shall proceed, in its le-

glimpse consequences, to reduce this measure of obedience ; which should tend to establish a less spiritual and comprehensive rule of moral practice ; which should imply that the law exacted a less rigorous service ; that it lowers its demands in accommodation to the infirmities of man ; that it accepts a sincere and partial, instead of a perfect and an universal obedience : should any interpretation of such a nature be advanced, what reception would it deservedly encounter ? It would be justly rejected, as being in its tendency dishonorable to God and to his holy law, contradictory to the general tenor of the Scriptures, and pregnant with the most serious mischiefs to the interests of morality. But is such the tendency of the doctrine before us ? Can any conclusions of this nature be reasonably inferred from it ? On the contrary, the extent and spirituality of the moral law form another part of the foundation on which this doctrine rests. Why does it teach us, that we must be justified by *faith* ? Because the unsinning obedience required by the law renders it impossible that we can ever be justified by *works*. Were the law less holy, less rigorous in its demands ; were it satisfied with less extensive services ; did it require only a sincere, but defective obedience ; there would then be no necessity for this revealed method of Justification. Man, in that case, might be justified by the deeds of the law. But because the law is holy ; because it declares, that “ the man who *doeth* these things shall live by them ;” because it denounces, “ Cursed is every one that *contineth* not in *all* things, which are written in the book of the law to do them :” * therefore, since righteousness cannot be attained by the law, the righteousness of faith is manifested in the Gospel. Does faith, then, “ make void the law ?” No. The doctrine of Justification by faith only, “ magnifies the law, and makes it honorable.” † It implies in the strongest manner, the holy, extensive, spiritual nature of that obedience, which the law requires. No foundation, then, in this instance, can be found for the objection alleged.

But though the doctrine in question neither weakens the obligation to obey the moral law, nor reduces the measure of the obedience required ; yet it may supersede the necessity of any obedience at all. The position, that we are justified by faith only, may contribute, in its legitimate conse-

* Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 10. † Isaiah, xlii. 21.

quences, to establish the conclusion that obedience is unnecessary to salvation. And how then can such a position be consistent with the general tenor of that Gospel, the professed object of which is to turn mankind from their iniquities, and to fit them for "an inheritance among them which are sanctified?" Doubtless, if such be the effect of this position, the inference deduced from it is just. If, while the doctrine of Justification by faith only professes to acknowledge the obligatory power and spiritual nature of the moral law, it at the same time tends to supersede the necessity of obedience to it; if it gives any real countenance to the assertion, that works are unnecessary to salvation; such a tendency must destroy every claim to its being received as a sound interpretation of Scriptural truth. But to repeat our former assertion, such is not the tendency of the doctrine. No such consequences can be fairly deduced from it. Since, however, it is in this part of the charge that the chief strength of the objection is supposed to lodge, let particular attention be applied to it.

What, in the first place, are the grounds, on which the necessity of obedience to the moral law is founded? Why is a holy conformity to the will and the image of God necessary to the salvation of man? Because, without this holy conformity, man would be unfit to enter into the presence of God, and unable to participate of the holy felicity of heaven. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.—Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* Under the dominion of evil, selfish, and tormenting passions, destitute of that peace and joy and love, of that devotedness of every power and faculty to the service and glory of the great Creator, in which the essence of heavenly felicity consists, the soul would possess no meetness for partaking of the inheritance of the saints in light. Could the proud, the covetous, the sensual, the profane, could such characters experience any pleasure in seeing God, and contemplating his great perfections? Could they find delight in the society of heaven, in the innumerable company of angels, in intercourse with "the spirits of just men made perfect?" The very language of those blessed mansions would be foreign to their hearts. They could not cordially unite their voices with the acclamations of that enraptured host, who "fall

* Heb. xii. 14. Matt. v. 8.

down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*

These must be holy whom such holy services engage. How then can man be saved without obedience to the moral law? Conformity to its most spiritual injunctions is indispensably necessary to his salvation. On this ground the necessity of obedience rests.

Advert next to the particular nature of Justification; and see whether it tends to supersede this necessity. See whether the objection before us does not arise from indistinctness of conception and inaccuracy of expression on this subject. Persons, when urging this objection, frequently speak as if Justification and Salvation were synonymous and convertible terms. But this is not a correct statement of the case. True it is, that in a loose and popular sense these terms may reasonably admit of such a transposition. The one may occasionally be used for the other. But let it be remembered, that Justification, in its precise and doctrinal meaning, designates only one part of salvation; that part, by which the guilt of sin is removed, and a perfect reconciliation between God and the sinner accomplished. In what respect, then, does this doctrine tend to supersede the necessity of obedience to the moral law? It undermines not, it approaches not the foundation, on which this necessity is built. While it excludes obedience from any participation in the office of justifying the sinner, it does not therefore imply that obedience is unnecessary to salvation. While it declares, that no holiness of heart and life has any share in atoning for sin, or in reconciling us to God, but that these glorious privileges are conveyed to us solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, it does not therefore intimate that no holiness of heart and life are requisite to qualify us for the enjoyment of our purchased inheritance. A criminal, laboring under a deadly sickness, receives a pardon from his monarch. If we should in this case assert, that the state of his health had no connection with the mercy received; such an assertion could never be construed to imply that his recovery from sickness was unconnected with his

* Rev. iv. 10, 11.

future happiness. Because his obligation to punishment has been remitted by an act of grace, it cannot therefore be inferred that health is unnecessary to his enjoyment of the royal bounty. Nay, we should rather form a directly opposite conclusion. We should rather say, that his deliverance from the sentence of death, and his restoration to his forfeited privileges, rendered the removal of his disorder a blessing more than ever desirable. With what color of truth then can it be said, that the doctrine of Justification by faith only supersedes the *necessity* of obedience? How can it be charged in this respect with "making void the law?" It provides a remedy for the penal consequences, which past disobedience has incurred; but it leaves the necessity of personal holiness to rest on the same foundation on which it always had rested, on which it would always have rested, had disobedience never been introduced; on the impossibility of holding communion with God, and of partaking of his felicity, without possessing corresponding dispositions, and being made partakers of his holiness.

Upon the whole, what becomes of the original objection? If, as we have seen, the method of justifying the sinner by faith only tends, in its legitimate consequences, neither to weaken the *obligation* to obey the moral law, nor to reduce the *measure* of the required obedience, nor to supersede the *necessity* of obedience; in what sense does it "make void the law?" In no sense whatever. The alleged charge of introducing and encouraging licentiousness is not substantiated. Destitute of every solid foundation, it necessarily falls to the ground.

II. "Faith establishes the law." The apostle not only rejects with abhorrence the injurious consequences imputed to this doctrine, but strenuously asserts, that a directly opposite conclusion ought to be deduced from it. Faith, far from making void the law, "establishes the law. Far from producing effects unfavorable to the cause of morality, it tends to strengthen and promote the interests of practical godliness. The method of Justification contended for, enforces the attainment of universal holiness by motives of the most exalted nature, and of the most constraining obligation.

What is the state of the justified sinner? Under a conviction of the danger and misery of sin, he has fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel; and, looking

unto Jesus, "he has found peace and joy in believing." This is "the grace in which he stands." He knows that "if he contend with the Almighty, he cannot answer him one of a thousand;" that "by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified in the sight of God." But he also knows, that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."* What, then, is the ground of all his present peace and future prospects? A comfortable hope of his acceptance "in the Beloved." Let this hope be once destroyed; his peace is broken, his prospects are clouded. Let him lose the sense of his interest in Christ; all his former fears return. Still he is under condemnation: the demands of the law are unanswered: the sword of justice is suspended over his head. To keep alive then this hope, to preserve this sense of his interest in Christ, is one leading object which the justified sinner has constantly in view. But how is the object to be accomplished? Doubtless, the Holy Ghost is the author of this blessed experience. If we are "filled with joy," it is "by the Holy Ghost." If we "abound in hope," it is "through the power of the Holy Ghost." It is "the Spirit itself which beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God."† But what is the nature of his testimony? In what manner does he usually evidence to us our adoption into the family of God, and our consequent title to the privileges of children? By reflecting light on his own work of grace in the heart, and thus by enabling us to trace out the existence of the cause by the effects evidently produced. Sanctification, as it is the earnest of future glory; so it is an infallible evidence, because an unfailing consequence of our present reconciliation with God. The new heart is that best gift, which the Almighty bestows upon his children. "Because they are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying Abba, Father."‡ Deliverance from the power of sin is a blessing annexed by promise to a state of Justification. "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."§ Would the sinner seek then an evidence of his justified state; of his adoption into the family of God; of his being not under the law, but under grace: he must inquire, whether he

* Job, ix. 3. Rom. iii. 20. viii. 1. x. 4. † Rom. xv. 13. viii. 16.

‡ Gal. iv. 6. § Rom. vi. 14.

can find a work of grace on his heart. Does he experience the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost? Is he renewed in the spirit of his mind? Having a hope that he is delivered from the penal consequences of transgression, is he praying, and watching, and striving, that he may be delivered also from the dominion of sin? While he abounds in the comforts of the Gospel, does he also increase in humility, in meekness, in patience, in lowliness of mind, in purity, in gentleness, in self-denial, in conformity to the holy law and image of ~~his~~ Maker? Is he a "follower of God as a dear child?" Does he "overcome the world?" Is he "careful to maintain good works?" Does he labor to "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things?" Observe what a constraining motive is thus provided to the attainment of universal holiness. The peace, the hope, the joy, the consolation of a sinner, are inseparably connected with the evidence of his interest in Christ. Hence, so long as one unchristian temper is suffered to prevail; so long as one evil disposition continues unsubdued; so long as one sinful propensity is allowedly indulged; that evidence on *Scriptural grounds* can never be obtained. According to the very scheme of salvation in which the sinner professes to confide, he is unable, till he shall have "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness," to give to his own heart "a reason of the hope that is in him."

But further, the faith which leads a sinner to Christ for Justification, includes a conviction, not only of the danger, but also of the *demerit* of sin. While the justified sinner has felt the sentence of death in himself, he has also felt the justice of that sentence. He has seen that "death is the wages of sin:" that eternal death is the due desert, the merited recompence, of transgression against God. In what light then does he view himself? As "a brand plucked out of the fire;" as a criminal, who "hath not been dealt with after his sins, nor rewarded according to his iniquities;" as a rebel, who, taken in arms against his rightful sovereign, has yet been freely pardoned, graciously invested with all the privileges of a loyal subject, admitted to favor, to confidence, to friendship! What sentiments does this view inspire? Sentiments of love, of gratitude, of obedience, of devotedness of body and soul to the service, to the glory of his merciful benefactor.

But these sentiments are still greatly augmented by a consideration of the means which have been employed in this work of mercy. Pardon has been freely extended to the sinner. But has no price been paid for it? Yes; an inestimable price: the blood of the Eternal Son of God. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us."* He has given his own life a ransom for sinners. Redeemed with such a ransom, shall sinners refuse to give their lives to Christ? "They are not their own; they are bought with a price. Shall they not glorify God with their bodies, and with their spirits, which are God's."† To what end has the Lord of Glory assumed their nature, humbled himself to death, and suffered in their stead? That he might "redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."‡ Shall they frustrate this merciful design? By wilful impenitence, shall they defeat his gracious purposes? Shall they indulge those hateful lusts which nailed their Saviour to the cross? Shall they thus "crucify afresh the Son of God?" Shall they "continue in sin that grace may abound?" Perish the ungenerous, the ungrateful thought! "Christ has loved us, and has given himself for us. He loved us, when dead in trespasses and sins. He gave himself for us, when enemies to God by wicked works. Shall we requite his love by resisting his authority? The time past of our lives may suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh. Henceforth the love of Christ constraineth us. Henceforth we live no longer unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. To his glory let every faculty be consecrated. In his service let all our members be yielded as instruments of righteousness unto God. Let us be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, that we may shew forth the praises of him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light."

It is impossible that any more efficacious incentive to the attainment of universal holiness can be adduced, than the motive which these reflections inspire. But such reflections naturally result from the doctrine under consideration. Love is the principle from which only all holy obedience can originate. Love is the principle which faith, and faith

* Gal. iii. 13.

† 1 Cor. vi. 20.

‡ Titus, ii. 14.

only, effectually generates in the heart. Thus "faith establishes the law."

Such are the practical effects of that leading doctrine of the Gospel, Justification by faith only. But, in reply to all the arguments advanced, perhaps it may be further contended by the opposers of the doctrine, that however favorable to morality this method of justifying the sinner may speculatively appear to be, yet facts and experience substantiate the contrary truth. 'The pernicious effects of this doctrine, after all the palliations which can be urged in its defence, are too visible to be denied. Numbers, who profess to be saved by grace through faith, in their practice make void the law. Presuming on what they call their Christian liberty, they run into excess of riot, and appear at least from their conduct, to be governed by the destructive principle, "let us continue in sin that grace may abound." ' My brethren, that some such characters have at all times existed; that some such characters may still exist, to the disgrace and sorrow of the Christian church, is readily admitted: characters of whom it may be said in the words of the weeping apostle, "that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things."* But what does the existence of such characters prove? Does it prove that the real tendency of the doctrine, which they affect to hold, is immoral and licentious? Let not such a conclusion be hastily adopted. Confound not the legitimate consequences of the doctrine with the unwarrantable abuse of it. Ascribe not to the doctrine those mischievous effects, which are to be imputed only to the depravity of human nature. Would you argue that the blessings of Providence are evil in their tendency, because men frequently pervert them into instruments of sin? Is the medicine proved to be originally bad, because from improper management it becomes a poison? If this mode of reasoning be allowed, it will equally bear against Christianity itself. In every age, numbers of those who have called themselves Christians, have, by their unholy practices, disgraced their holy calling. "Professing to know God they have in works denied him." Is Christianity therefore immoral in its tendency? You cannot be prepared

* Phil. iii. 18, 19.

to admit this conclusion. Urge not then the licentious lives of some, who maintain that we are justified by faith only, as conclusive evidence that this tenet encourages licentiousness. See if there be not among the supporters of the doctrine, others, who equally with yourselves, lament and abominate this sad perversion of it. Examine with that candor, which becomes the inquirers after truth, into the whole merits of the case. See whether this doctrine be not productive of highly practical effects, in the far larger proportion of those persons who embrace it. See whether their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope," be not great and exemplary. See whether, in numerous instances, they do not exhibit the brightest patterns of Christian simplicity, moderation, zeal, humility, charity; of self-denying exertions; of unwearied perseverance in well-doing; of fidelity in the discharge of relative and social duties; of cheerfulness under sufferings; of meekness; of integrity; of heavenly tempers and affections. If the immoral conduct of some be adduced as an argument subversive of the doctrine; appeal can with confidence be made to the holy lives of thousands in confirmation and support of it.

To conclude. If the discussion of this subject fall short of the end proposed; if it prove insufficient to carry conviction to those for whom it is designed; yet let it not fail of producing its proper effects on the advocates for Justification by faith only. Is so formidable an objection alleged against your fundamental doctrine? Let your whole life be a refutation of the charge. Are you reproached with the pernicious consequences of your tenets? Labor the more strenuously and circumspectly to shew, by your own example, that the doctrine which you profess is "a doctrine according to godliness." Are you called to contend for what you conceive to have been "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints?" Contend with meekness of wisdom. Contend in the spirit of love. Prove that the way of truth is the more excellent way by the excellence of the fruits which it displays. Let this be the object of your contention, to excel in good works; to abound more and more in all holy conversation and godliness; "by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are

just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which we have both learned and received" from Christ and his apostles "do ; and the God of peace shall be with you."*

SERMON XXX.

Scriptural Statement of the Doctrines of Human Corruption,
and of the Renewal of the Heart to Holiness.

ECCLESIASTES, ix. 3.

The Heart of the Sons of Men is full of Evil.

IT is a truth, which Scripture throughout inculcates, and experience every day confirms, that no man, without some previous sense of his guilt and danger as a sinner, will ever cordially submit himself to the righteousness of God. The free gift of Justification will be little esteemed by one, who retains the presumptuous hope, that he has a righteousness of his own, in which he may appear before God. If the man-slayer had not dreaded the sword of the avenger of blood, he would not have fled for safety to the city of refuge. If the Israelites had not felt the envenomed bite of the fiery serpents, they would not have looked up for cure to the brazen serpent. If the sinner be not impressed with some conviction of his misery, he will never flee to Christ for refuge, or look up to him for deliverance from the wrath to come.

The same train of reasoning may be adopted with respect to the other branch of salvation, our Sanctification. The promise of the Spirit, and of the Renewal of the Heart to Holiness, will be lightly regarded by those who cherish favorable sentiments of the goodness of their own hearts, or entertain very limited notions of their original depravity. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Some adequate conceptions must be obtained of

* Phil. ii. 8, 9.

the strength and inveteracy of the disease, before any just apprehensions can be formed of the necessity and magnitude of the projected cure. To no other cause, indeed, but to inadequate conceptions of the nature and extent of Human Corruption is it owing, that so many partial and defective sentiments prevail respecting the meaning of *conversion*; of being "born again of the Spirit;" of "putting off the old man, and of putting on the new man"; and of other corresponding expressions, by which a transition from a state of sin to a state of holiness is designated. Yet such inadequate conceptions cannot but exist, so long as men, instead of simply crediting the plain and positive declarations of the word of God, listen to the suggestions of their own proud and carnal reasonings, and interpret the sacred text in conformity to their favorite and pre-established opinions.

With the view of offering some remedy for this evil, I have made choice of a text, in which the inspired writer asserts, in very unequivocal terms, the inherent and extensive depravity of human nature. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." From the numerous passages of Scripture, which bear decisive testimony to this truth, perhaps it would be difficult to adduce a text in which the doctrine is exhibited in a more concise and comprehensive view. In discoursing on these words, I purpose to employ them for obviating some misconceptions which prevail on the subjects,

I. Of man's Natural Corruption.

II. Of his Renewal to Holiness.

1. One prevailing misconception on the subject of Human Corruption respects the *seat* of the disorder. The wickedness of the *lives* of men is readily admitted. Their ambition, cruelty, injustice, animosity, revenge, their evil tempers, their immoral practices, are too notorious to be denied. But while the effects are acknowledged, the cause from which they spring is overlooked. These violations of the law of God are represented as resulting from weakness, from inadvertency, from surprise, from the violence of temptation, from the force of habit, from the influence of example. They are described as irregularities, greatly indeed to be lamented, but accidental and extraneous, not necessarily connected with any inward principle of evil. What is the daily language of numbers? "Our lives, it is true, are not exempt from blame. We are guilty of many

indiscretions. But our heart is good.' In opposition to this language, the text asserts that the origin of all the evil is within. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." Not the streams alone are filthy and defiled; but the fountain is polluted. The disease is not merely external; not the extremities only are affected; but the blood is tainted, the very vitals are unsound. The Corruption is a radical Corruption. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Where so much practical wickedness abounds, the heart cannot be good. See if the whole tenor of the word of God accords not with the assertion in the text. Does not the Almighty declare, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?"* Is not the perverse and ungodly conduct of mankind repeatedly ascribed to their "walking after the imaginations of their evil heart"?† From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence; even of your lusts, which war in your members?‡ The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." But it is "out of the abundance of the heart" that "the mouth speaketh."§ To what source does Christ, who "knew what was in man," refer every evil of which man is guilty? To the evil principle which operates within. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."||

Another ground of misconception on the subject of Human Corruption respects the *degree* and *extent* of the disorder. "Though the heart, it is admitted, be bad, yet it is only partially bad. If some propensity to evil be found within us; yet many contrary dispositions exist to counteract it. Look at the most barbarous nations. Even among these, generosity, gratitude, fidelity, and other similar good qualities frequently abound. Look at the young, and at such as are not deeply sunk in vice. They will uniformly applaud an instance of integrity, of disinterestedness, or of any other virtue, placed before them in practice or in narrative; and will condemn a contrary conduct. Do not these examples prove, that there is some tendency in man to what is good: that goodness maintains even a preponderating influence in the heart?" But what

* Gen. viii. 21. Jer. xvii. 9. † Jer. vii. 24. ‡ James, iv. 7.
§ Matt. xii. 34. || Matt. xv. 19.

says the text? "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." The corruption is not only radical, but total. In the figurative language of the prophet, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness."* The propensity to evil, far from being counteracted by contrary dispositions, naturally experiences no check. The examples adduced prove nothing to the purpose for which they are advanced. Generosity, gratitude, fidelity, and the exercise of many other pleasing qualities between man and man; the spontaneous applause of virtue and morality; the decided condemnation of immorality and vice, may all exist, without any tendency in man to what is truly good. They are not necessarily connected with any inward principle of goodness, in the Scriptural meaning of the word. For what is goodness, as opposed to evil in the text? It is godliness. It is holiness. It is a spiritual conformity to the law, to the will, to the image of the Almighty. Goodness, thus considered, far from maintaining a preponderating influence in the heart, is utterly excluded. Evil alone exists and reigns within. Such is the universal language of the word of truth. I know, says the apostle, "that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." It is emphatically said, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." In what light does the Almighty, before whom "all things are naked and opened," view the human heart? He sees "that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually."† Words cannot more strongly and copiously depict the total depravity of man. Observe the force and fulness of the expressions. "The thoughts of man's heart, the imaginations" of the thoughts of his heart, are evil: evil without exception, for it is "every imagination" which is evil: evil without any intermixture of good, for it is *only* evil: evil without any interruption, for it is evil "continually."

Another ground of misconception still remains to be considered. 'If such,' it is contended, 'be in some instances the state of the heart; yet it is not always, nor even generally such. It is not every man, nay perhaps, in modern times, at least in Christian countries, there is not any man of whom it may with truth be said, that the thoughts of his

* Isaiah, i. 5, 6. † Rom. vii. 18. viii. 7. Gen. vi. 5.

heart are only evil continually. This total depravity is the effect of gross darkness, and of a long and unrestrained course of iniquity. In the Antediluvian and Gentile worlds, immersed as they were in ignorance and abominable wickedness, such instances might frequently occur. But now, under the Gospel dispensation, when the true light so clearly shines, when the standard of morality is so considerably raised ; we hope better things of mankind, and cannot in justice ascribe to the professors of Christianity that degree of inward depravity, which heathens and idolaters are reported to have attained.* But the text admits of no distinction of this kind. It speaks collectively of the whole human race, as indiscriminately involved in the same general Corruption. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." The declaration is absolute. No exception is stated or implied on account of any difference of outward dispensation under which mankind may be placed. The texts, which have been already adduced on this subject, are expressed in the same general and comprehensive terms. We are positively told, that, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man ?"† If superior religious advantages tend to make the degree of Human Corruption originally less, the Jews, when comparing their state with that of their heathen neighbors, might have advanced the same plea in extenuation of their natural depravity. But, in refutation of every such plea, the Spirit of God asserts in that very Psalm, which St. Paul produces as descriptive of the Jews no less than of the Gentiles, that "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God. They are all gone aside ; they are altogether filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."‡ Even that same apostle, whose pretensions to a less degree of original Corruption were, on the plea here combated, confessedly strong, yet decidedly classes himself with those "children of disobedience among whom, says he, we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."‡ Nor does the word of God give any grounds for supposing that this plea can be better defended under the Christian than under the Jewish dispensa-

* Prov. xxvii. 19. † Psalm, xiv. 2, 3. Rom. iii. 11, 12. ‡ Ephes. ii. 3.

tion. The Gospel, by providing a remedy for Human Corruption, so far contributes to diminish the extent of it. But it pretends not to make that Corruption originally less. The Scriptural representation of the source of Human Corruption effectually precludes every idea of this nature. The Gospel uniformly proceeds on the supposition, that man is born in sin; that his Corruption is not accidental, but innate; not acquired, but hereditary. God made Adam upright "in his own image, after his own likeness in righteousness and true holiness." But Adam transmitted not this heavenly image to his posterity. It is pointedly declared, that he "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image,"* in that state of radical and total depravity to which he was himself reduced by his fall. How could it be otherwise? Hear what Job says. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" Hear what David says. "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Hear what Christ says. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."† No exceptions, no distinctions, no degrees of Corruption are intimated. "Every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam,"‡ is carnal: and the carnal mind is enmity against God.

II. I proceed to obviate some misconceptions which prevail respecting the Renewal of the Heart to Holiness.

The discussion of this point may not at first sight appear to be immediately connected with the text. But if, as the Scriptures teach, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" then every text, which points out the nature and extent of Human Corruption, points out by implication the nature and extent of that moral change, which man must undergo. And it will on examination be found, that every erroneous sentiment which prevails with respect to the nature and extent of this moral change, exactly corresponds with the misconceptions previously entertained on the subject of Human Corruption.

Those who limit their views of man's depravity to the outward wickedness of the life, will necessarily limit their apprehensions of the change required to the outward amend-

* Gen. v. 1. 3.

† Job, xiv. 4. xv. 14. Psalm, li. 5. John, iii. 6.

‡ Article IX.

ment of the life. The language which they hold is this : 'Renounce your vicious habits. Forsake your evil practices. Let virtue reassume her empire in your bosom. Listen to her voice. Obey her dictates.' What are the effects of this advice ? The libertine lays aside his irregularities. The drunkard discontinues his filthy pleasures. The profane no longer stuns the ear with horrid imprecations. The passionate become mild ; the parsimonious, liberal ; the rapacious, just. But this is not the only change required. While the outward conduct is amended, the heart is not reformed. The love of sin, pride, and selfishness, aversion to God and holiness, still reign within. While such principles continue to direct the conduct, the man is not turned to God. He is turned only from one iniquity to another ; to another less offensive, it may be, in the sight of his fellow-creatures, but not perhaps less hateful in the sight of his heart-searching Creator. Some few branches are lopped off ; but the nature of the stock remains unimproved. Some few streams are stopped ; but the fountain still retains its poisonous quality. If the Corruption be radical, the change must be radical. If the heart be the seat of the disorder, the remedy must reach the heart. Listen to the mandates of Inspiration. "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved, How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee ?—Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded."—"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter ; that the outside of them may be clean. Did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also ?"*

Defective, in like manner, on this subject, will be the sentiments of those, who, while they admit the heart to be the seat of the disease, yet entertain false conceptions of the degree and extent of the disorder. If the heart be only partially corrupt, only a partial change can be required. 'Let the evil propensities be weakened and subdued. Let the inherent good dispositions be strengthened and encouraged. Let the noxious weeds, the tares, and thorns, be cleared away : and the seeds of virtue, thus freed from every impediment which can obstruct their growth, will naturally vegetate and thrive.' But this is not a rem-

* Jer. iv. 14. James, iv. 8: Mat. xxiii. 26. Luke, xi. 40.

only adapted to the disease. It does not reach the extent of the disorder. The Corruption is total; total must be the change. Where are those inherent good dispositions? Where are those seeds of virtue to be found? In the natural heart they have no place. In that soil holiness meets nothing congenial. Sin is the only plant which vegetates and thrives therein. Here then must the change be made. In this soil must the melioration first commence. The heart must undergo a renovation. Some new leaven must be inserted, which may gradually diffuse its potent influence throughout the lump, until the whole be leavened. Some new principle, must be applied, which may communicate a new direction to every power and faculty of the soul, until "old things are passed away, and all things are become new." Such is the change which the Scriptures throughout inculcate. "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit." "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind." "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds." "Put ye on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

A third ground of misconception on the point before us, respects the objects on whom this change is to be wrought. If, while it be conceded on the one hand, that the Corruption described in the text is radical and total, it be asserted on the other, that there is a large proportion of mankind to whom this description is not applicable, the concession will avail but little. Those who restrict to the Antediluvian and Gentile worlds the Scriptural statements of Natural Corruption, cannot extend to the professors of Christianity the necessity of a Renewal of the Heart to Holiness. 'Man,' they cry, 'no longer involved in heathen darkness, is not now utterly depraved. Wherever the light of the Gospel has been diffused, his nature has been gradually improved. What necessity can now exist for a renovation of his heart? All those expressions in the sacred writings, which seem to intimate such a necessity, are to be regarded by us as passages in which we have no concern, or to be interpreted in some modified and milder sense.' May the Scriptural views, which have been exhibited of the nature and extent of Human Corruption, contribute to explode such false and dangerous notions! If "the heart of the sons of men be

* Ezek. xlviii. 31. Rom. xii. 2. Ephes. iv. 23, 24.

full of evil, the heart of" the sons of men must "be renewed to holiness." "If that which is born of the flesh be flesh," every child of Adam must be born again, or be for ever excluded from the mansions of the blessed. Such is the express assertion of our Lord, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* No distinction is stated. No limitation is intimated. No individual then of the human race can plead an exemption from this comprehensive declaration. If every man naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam be carnal, "marvel not that ye must be born again."

Such are some of the prevailing misconceptions, which I proposed to obviate. That they result from a criminal inattention to the truths revealed, from a presumptuous substitution of man's natural reasoning in the room of the plain and positive declarations of the word of God, has been fully shown. Humiliating indeed, and highly repugnant to our pride and self-complacency is the picture, which the sacred mirror discloses, of the radical, the total, the universal depravity of the human heart. But it is a picture delineated by the hand of Him, who vindicates to himself the prerogative of "searching the hearts and of trying the reins of the children of men." Far, then, from taking offence at the representation exhibited; far from endeavoring to disavow its resemblance, or to palliate its deformity, let us thankfully receive, let us profitably use the information thus vouchsafed.

1. Let us thankfully receive the information vouchsafed. The Corruption of Human Nature and the consequent necessity of a Renewal of the Heart to Holiness, are truths for the clear knowledge of which we are indebted to revelation. They are truths indeed, which, when once revealed, are capable of being proved by facts and experience; and which therefore, in this respect, differ from many of the higher mysteries of revelation, which are proposed to us as objects of faith alone; but they are truths, which, without the imparted light of revelation, would for ever have remained in impenetrable darkness. The unassisted powers of natural reason might possibly have discovered that the soul of man was in a disordered state. And at such a discovery some few of the wisest among the heathens actually arrived. But the

* John, iii. 3.

nature, the seat, the extent of the disorder, the necessity, the magnitude, the means of a recovery, were points beyond the reach of human penetration; points, to the knowledge of which we should never have attained, had not God, "who was rich in mercy, of his great love, wherewith he loved us," disclosed them to us in his word. Nor can the importance of such a disclosure be sufficiently appreciated. Unaccompanied by such a disclosure, all the stupendous blessings of the Gospel would have been offered to us in vain. Ignorant of the lost and ruined condition of our soul; ignorant of that entire renovation, which the heart must undergo, we should never have embraced, we should utterly have despised the remedy provided. Let us then praise the Lord for his goodness in having fully revealed to us our real state. Let us with gratitude receive the Scriptural details of our natural depravity, as so many proofs of the paternal love and of the tender solicitude of Him, who "desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." To deny the doctrine of original Corruption is not only to reject the testimony of the Almighty, to refuse "to set to our seal that God is true;" but to despise the expressions of his love and mercy; to betray the foulest ingratitude, no less than the most daring pride and the most impious presumption.

2. But while we thankfully receive, let us also profitably use the information vouchsafed. To this end let us wisely appropriate it. The truths of Scripture, unless faithfully applied and brought home to our own hearts and circumstances, will conduce little to our improvement. The text sets before us the picture of mankind in general. Let us remember that it sets before us *our* picture in particular. "Is the heart of the sons of men full of evil?" Such is our heart. Such is the radical, the total, the innate Corruption of our souls. Born of the flesh, we are flesh. Nor let us stop even at this conclusion. Let us seek to acquire a deep, an experimental conviction of the truth. Let us compare our hearts with the word of God. While we read with attention the statement there delivered of man's depravity, let us observe whether we do not find a corresponding depravity within our own bosoms: whether we do not find, with respect to spiritual things, that blindness in the understanding; that perverseness in the will; that ungovernableness

in the affections; that impurity in the imagination; that vanity in the mind; above all, that alienation of the heart from God, which the Scriptures designate as characteristic of fallen man. Let us examine ourselves in one single instance. If our hearts be not alienated from God, communion with him will be our chief delight: prayer and praise will be the natural language of our souls. But does this on experience prove to be the case? On the contrary, what indisposition do we not feel to such holy exercises? What backwardness in commencing them? What dulness and formality in performing them? How difficult, nay, how impossible do we find it, with all our watchfulness, with all the force which we are able to apply, to maintain for the shortest period, and even on the most solemn occasions, an undivided attention, a spiritual frame of mind. Can we then doubt of the native enmity of our hearts to God? The very necessity of applying force to the mind, shews what is its inherent tendency; in what direction the current, if not opposed, would naturally flow.

Nor let us rest satisfied with this conviction. Let our experience of the violence and of the inveteracy of the malady, lead us earnestly to seek for help from Him who alone can heal our disordered souls. This is the great improvement which we are required to make of the information vouchsafed. To bring us humbly unto God for the renovation of our corrupt nature; this is the great practical end, which the conviction of our natural Corruption is intended to promote. To attempt this important work in our own strength, or by means of our own devising, will be a presumptuous and an unsuccessful attempt. With as much facility may we create a world as create our own hearts anew. "The preparations of the heart of man are from the Lord."* He who alone searcheth the heart, alone can renew it unto holiness. To Him then let us apply for the blessing. We have the strongest assurances that our application shall not be in vain. He hath given unto us "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature."† The promise of the new heart is the leading promise of the new covenant. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward

* Prov. xvi. 1. † 2 Peter, i. 4.

parts, and write it in their hearts. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."* Encouraged by these gracious promises, let us pray with the penitents of old, "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." Let us cry out with the psalmist, "Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us." Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, and in the language of our church intreat the Lord, who is the giver of all good things, to 'write his laws in our hearts; to create and make in us new and contrite hearts; to grant that we, being regenerated and made his children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with the Father, and the same Spirit, ever one God world without end.' Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

On the Gift of the Spirit.

JOHN, iv. 10.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the Gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

TRUE charity is distinguished by a tender concern for the souls, as well as for the bodies of men. Seeing by faith the end of the ungodly, it confines not its exertions in their favor to the attainment of transitory comforts: it seeks to promote their permanent and everlasting felicity. Such is the charity which characterizes the real Christian. Acting under the influence of this heavenly

* Jer. xxxi. 33. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

principle, he is continually looking around him for opportunities of usefulness. In all his transactions, in all his intercourse with others, he seldom loses sight of their most important interests. And in a judicious improvement of common occurrences into occasions of spiritual instruction, no inconsiderable portion of his wisdom consists.

Of this, as of every other exercise of Christian charity, the life of our blessed Saviour exhibits the brightest pattern. The same compassionate love for perishing sinners, which brought him down from heaven, continued pre-eminently to display itself during his residence on earth. While he "went about, healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people," he forgot not their disordered souls. These were the objects of his unceasing and tenderest solicitude. It was the spiritual ignorance of his hearers which excited his compassion. It was their spiritual obduracy which moved his grief. It was their spiritual improvement to which his attention was ever alive, and to which all his discourses were uniformly directed. We meet with a striking instance to this effect in the text, and in the passage connected with it.

In the course of his ministry, our Lord coming to Sychar, a city of Samaria, sat down by the side of a well. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it, that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Jesus, without noticing the impropriety of her conduct, mildly answered in the words of my text: "If thou knewest the Gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

This reply was clearly dictated by a regard to her spiritual good. Its direct tendency was to rouse her attention to the concerns of her soul, and to an improvement of the glorious opportunity now vouchsafed to her. Had she been sensible of the distinguishing privilege which at this moment she enjoyed; had she been apprised of the power and grace of the person with whom she was conversing: had she felt her own need of that inestimable blessing, which he was both able and willing to bestow upon her; far from wasting the precious moments, she would have been earnestly pray-

ing to him for an interest in his favor, and for a supply of her wants. Nor would her prayers have been ineffectual. In answer to her entreaties, he would have given to her "living water." "Living water" was the blessing of which she stood most in need: the Gift, which he was ready to bestow on her.

What then is "living water?" Though the expression be evidently figurative, yet we have no difficulty in ascertaining its true meaning. That by "living water" the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit are signified, we have direct testimony from a subsequent passage in this Gospel. For Christ having affirmed, "he that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water:" it is expressly added by the evangelist, "but this spake he of the *Spirit*, which they that believe on him should receive."*

It was the usual practice of our Lord, not only to inculcate and explain divine truths by allusions to sensible and familiar objects, but also to borrow his illustrations from the particular circumstances or conversation in which he happened to be engaged. Thus, on the present occasion, his discourse with the woman of Samaria naturally led him to speak of the Holy Spirit under the image of water. Nor could any image have been selected more significant or proper. The purifying, refreshing, and fertilizing qualities of water, afford very apt and striking emblems of the sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God. And the frequent use which the prophets had made of this illustration, stamps our Lord's adoption of it with a peculiar propriety. We find Zechariah and Isaiah thus predicting the copious effusion of the Spirit under the Gospel. "It shall be in that day that living water shall go out of Jerusalem. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring."†

These passages, with many others which might be adduced, fully justify the interpretation adopted above. The blessing of which the woman stood in need, the Gift which Jesus was able to bestow, and professed himself ready to bestow at her request, was the Holy Ghost. This was the "living water" of which he spake.

* John, vii. 38, 39. † Zech. xiv. 8. Isaiah, xlv. 3.

From the text thus explained, I proceed to deduce some observations for general use and application.

I. We may observe that the Holy Ghost is "the Gift of God." It is so styled by way of distinction and pre-eminence. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Every blessing which we receive from God is a gift, wholly unmerited, freely bestowed, "without money and without price." But the communication of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Spirit, is a blessing, which, from its vast importance, claims to itself in a peculiar manner the title of "the Gift of God." It is that Gift which virtually comprehends every other blessing. It is that Gift, without which every other blessing would be useless and unsatisfying. It is that Gift, the attainment of which, our Lord assured his disciples, would not only compensate for the loss of his own personal presence, but would render his departure even expedient and desirable. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."* It is that Gift, without the addition of which, even the *unspeakable gift* of a Saviour had been vouchsafed in vain. It is "through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience," in conjunction with the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,"† that our redemption is completed. To what purpose had the Son of God poured out his precious blood upon the cross, had not the Spirit been imparted to discover to us our need of his sacrifice, and to apply his atoning blood with efficacy to our consciences? To what purpose had the glad tidings of salvation been published in all the world, had not the dispensation of the Spirit been annexed to the ministry of the word? The natural man, unenlightened by the Spirit of truth, would never have discovered the things of God, "because they are spiritually discerned."‡ Being "yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," he would never have cordially submitted to the holy and humbling doctrines of the Gospel. He might have heard them with indifference, or have rejected them with scorn: he might coldly have assented to them with the understanding, or presumptuously have converted them into encouragements to sin: but never

* John, xvi. 3.

† 1 Peter, i. 2.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

would he have heartily believed, embraced, obeyed, and practised them. Destitute of the accompanying influences of the Spirit, the grand scheme of redemption must have been utterly frustrated. The remedy would have proved insufficient for the disease. And notwithstanding the astonishing spectacle exhibited on Mount Calvary, every soul of man would have eternally perished, in obstinate impenitence, in proud unbelief, in incorrigible enmity to God and holiness. Behold "the Gift of God."

II. We may observe from the text that the Holy Ghost is represented also as the *Gift of Christ*. Our Lord tells the woman of Samaria, that *he* would have given to her living water. From first to last, the merits of Christ are the only procuring cause of our redemption. Whatever deliverances, whatever blessings, whatever privileges are conferred upon us in the covenant of grace, they are derived through this single channel. Are the influences of the Spirit vouchsafed to turn our hearts, to make us meet "for the inheritance of the Saints in light?" They are vouchsafed to us in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered for us. What measure of grace had been imparted to man from the beginning, had been imparted in virtue of that atonement for sin, which Christ, in the fulness of time, was to make by the sacrifice of himself. But on this very account they were dispensed before his coming in the flesh with a less liberal hand, and in a less striking manner. The larger communications of the Spirit were reserved for that important period, when the satisfaction for sin should be actually accomplished by the death of Christ on the cross; when the sufficiency and acceptance of that satisfaction should be incontrovertibly proved by his resurrection from the dead, and his exaltation to glory: that the source from whence this blessing descended, might be fully disclosed; and the whole dispensation of grace redound in the clearest manner to the honor of the Redeemer. Therefore it was declared by St. John, even during our Saviour's ministry, that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."* And hence the blessing of the Spirit may justly be denominated the Gift of Christ. It was the purchase of his blood, the fruit of his mediation. It was conferred on us

* John, vii. 39.

solely for his sake : to magnify the value of his sufferings ; to proclaim the efficacy of his intercession ; to enhance the glories of his triumph.

But there is another and more appropriate sense, in which the Holy Ghost may be called the *Gift of Christ*. As Mediator of the covenant, he has obtained the disposal of this Gift. "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."* In his hands the whole dispensation of the Spirit is vested for the benefit of his church ; for the establishment, increase, and consummation of his universal kingdom. When he had received all power in heaven and in earth, the first act of his kingly office was to "give gifts unto men." In accomplishment of the predictions of his forerunner St. John, he baptized his followers with the Holy Ghost. In fulfilment of his own most gracious promise, he sent the Comforter to his apostles. What is the language of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost ? Speaking of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, he tells the Jews, that the same Jesus whom they had taken, and by wicked hands had crucified and slain, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, had shed forth this which they now saw and heard."† In perfect unison with this testimony, are other declarations of the word of God. What is the confirmation of St. Paul ? "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ."‡ "Of his fulness, (says St. John,) have all we received, and grace for grace."§ Hence the Holy Spirit is occasionally called in Scripture, "the Spirit of Christ ; the Spirit of the Son." Hence those operations which are wrought by the peculiar agency of the Spirit, are frequently mentioned as if performed by Christ himself. Christ is styled, "the Light of the world ; our Wisdom and Sanctification ; the Author and Finisher of our faith ; who is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto men." Hence he declares to the tempted apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee ;"¶ and to the woman in the text, that *He* would have given her living water.

III. We may observe from the text, that Prayer is the appointed instrument to be employed for obtaining the Gift of the Spirit. Christ says to the woman, "thou wouldst

* Col. i. 19. † Acts, ii. 33. ‡ Ephes. iv. 7. § John, i. 16. || 2 Cor. xii. 9.

have asked, and he would have given thee living water." While he declares his readiness to bestow the gift, he intimates the necessity of application on her part, for the attainment of the blessing. He knew her wants; he was able and willing to relieve them: but he expected that she should *ask* of him that relief of which she stood in need. With this representation, the tenor of the word of God throughout accords. Though salvation be of grace, though the whole work and glory be the Lord's, the knowledge of this truth precludes not the use of the appointed means. What says the apostle in opposition to every perverse conclusion of this kind? "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* Numerous and decisive indeed are the testimonies with which the Scriptures abound of the necessity and duty of prayer. When the Almighty discloses the rich profusion of mercies which he had still in reserve for the Jewish people, he subjoins this remarkable declaration, "I will yet for this be *enquired* of by the house of Israel to do it for them."† The gifts and privileges of the Gospel are freely offered to all: but to whom are they promised? To those who seek them by faith and prayer. In what manner did our Lord on many occasions conduct himself towards the persons who applied to him for bodily cures? He knew their wishes: he designed to comply with them: but previously to bestowing the Gift, he drew from their lips a confession of their misery, and an earnest prayer for mercy. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"‡ Nay, he sometimes appeared even to disregard their cries, till by repeated and importunate entreaties they seemed to have extorted the blessing from him. Thus while our heavenly Father knoweth of what things we have need, he yet commands us "by prayer and supplication to make our requests known unto him." Even with respect to those gifts which he purposes to confer on us, he appoints the exercise of prayer as a necessary step towards receiving them. Nor can we sufficiently admire the wisdom and excellence of such an appointment. It consults at once the honor of God and the infirmity of man. It leaves to God the whole glory of supplying our necessities; and it constitutes a test of our humility, of our faith, and of

* Phil. ii. 12, 13. † Ezek. xxxvi. 37. ‡ Luke. xviii. 41. John, v. 6.

our obedience. Prayer, when properly offered, expresses our Conviction of our weakness and wants, and our reliance on the divine mercy and truth: when answered, it exalts the perfections of God, augments our confidence in them, and increases our motives to gratitude: while the reasonableness of the duty prescribed leaves without excuse those persons who refuse or omit to comply with it, detects the pride and hypocrisy of their hearts, and exposes them to the merited consequences of their folly and sin.

But while the necessity of prayer is thus clearly pointed out and established, the success and efficacy of it are no less plainly implied in the text, and confirmed by the general testimony of Scripture. Christ intimates to the woman, that had she applied to him, her application would not have been in vain: "he would have given her living water." Hark-en to his own express declarations to this effect on other occasions. "God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."* Innumerable passages concur in speaking the same truth. What says Solomon? "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God: for the Lord giveth wisdom."† What says St. James? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." What saith the Lord by his prophet Isaiah? "It shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and whilst they are yet speaking I will hear."‡ The whole history of the Bible is an exemplification of the same truth. The instances of Jacob, of Lot, of Hannah, of Elijah, of Daniel, of Hezekiah, of Jonah, are so many illustrations of the subject before us; so many unequivocal proofs of the prevalence and efficacy of prayer.

IV. We may observe from the words under considera-

* Luke, xi 13. Matt. vii. 7, 8. John, xvi. 23, 24. † Prov. ii 3, 4, 5, 6. ‡ James, i. 5. Isaiah, lxx. 24.

tion, that one very general cause of neglecting to pray for the blessing of the Spirit, is ignorance respecting it. Men know neither the nature and value of the Gift; nor their own need of it; nor the manner of obtaining it; nor Christ's power and willingness to impart it: therefore they make no inquiries after it. Observe the language of our Lord in the text. "If thou *knewest* the Gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou *wouldest ask*."

This woman was now conversing with the Saviour of the world, who alone was enabled to bestow on her all spiritual blessings. It was the most momentous and critical hour of her life. She now possessed such an opportunity as she never had possessed before, and might never possess again. But she was on the point of losing all these advantages. Instead of throwing herself at the feet of Christ, and of imploring him to sanctify and save her guilty soul, she was treating him with indifference, and almost with contempt. She had a pearl of great price within her reach; yet she stretched not out her hand to take it. For she was ignorant of its value. She knew not "Christ and the Gift of God." She was a stranger to the dignity of the person with whom she was discoursing; to the excellence of the Gift which he was ready to bestow on her; to her own character, situation, and wants.

But was such ignorance peculiar to this woman? Look round into the world, and see if it be not common to thousands. Look into your own hearts, my brethren, and see if it belong not to yourselves. You indeed have not Christ personally present with you. But he is ever present by his Spirit, by his word, and by his ministers. "Behold" he cries, "I stand at the door and knock."* His promises, his offers, his invitations, are still addressed to you. He is still ready to bestow on you the Gift of God: to give to you "living water;" to shed abroad the Holy Ghost into your hearts. Yet how many of you hear these glorious tidings without emotion! You value them not. You are intent on your several pursuits of business or of pleasure; eager to add "field to field, and to join house to house;" or saying to your soul, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." You attend the public ordinances of Christ. You call

* Rev. iii. 20.

yourselves his disciples. You render to him a formal service. But you never heartily pray to him for the blessing of the Spirit, that first, best Gift, which he has purchased for you, and freely offers to you. You walk over the field regardless of the inestimable treasure, which lies hid beneath its surface. From what cause does this conduct spring? From your ignorance of Christ, of the Gift of God, of your own character, situation, and wants. If you *knew* these things you *would* ask. If you knew that you were "wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked," you would pray to Christ for "gold tried in the fire that you might be rich; for white raiment, that you might be clothed; for eye-salve that you might see." And whence does this ignorance arise; from want of opportunity, of instruction, of capacity? No: from want of attention to the truths revealed in Scripture. Whatever might have been the case with the woman in the text; whatever excuse she might possibly be allowed to urge for not knowing Christ and the Gift of God; you cannot plead the same excuse. You have the word of God to teach you. If you continue strangers to the excellence of Christ; of his gifts and offers, your ignorance can proceed only from your neglect and disbelief of his word; because you love the body better than the soul; because you love this world better than the next; because you love sin better than God. But will ignorance, which arises from such causes, be any extenuation of your guilt? When God, by his prophet Isaiah, denounces the desolations which were coming on his people of old, take notice of the leading charge which he prefers against them. "The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the works of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands: therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge." And in another passage; "It is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favor."* When Christ himself, in after ages, predicts the final destruction which would speedily fall upon Jerusalem, observe what he assigns as the immediate cause of this calamity. "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."† In both instances, ignorance resulting from wilful inconsideration, is represented as closely

* Isaiah, v. 12, 13. xxvii. 11. † Luke, xix. 44.

connected with the impending judgments. God forbid that you, my brethren, should be equally ignorant ! That you should not know the Gift of God, and thus perish for want of asking for it ! If inconsideration be the great source of ignorance, for once be serious. Fix your wandering thoughts. Reflect on the proofs which have been adduced of the importance of that Gift. It is "the Gift of God;" the Gift which the Son of God came down from heaven to purchase: the Gift, the want of which even Christ's continual presence could not compensate. Consider your utter need of the Spirit of God, the essential part which he takes in your salvation. It is the Spirit who "convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; *who* takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto men; *who* guides us into all truth." It is the Spirit of whom, "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is the Spirit by whom you must be made partakers of that "heredity without which no man shall see the Lord." It is the Spirit who alone can effectually work in you "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the Spirit from whom "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." Without his preventing grace you cannot read the Bible with understanding and profit; you cannot hear the preached word with improvement; you cannot think or do "such things as be rightful." It is the Spirit, who alone can "take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and can give you a heart of flesh;" who can strengthen you under temptations; can comfort you in afflictions; can help your infirmities; can shed abroad the love of God in your hearts; "can fill you with all peace and joy in believing; can seal you unto the day of redemption. Contemplate these important operations; and say whether the Gift of the Spirit be not an invaluable Gift? Can you be saved without it? Can any thing supply the want of it? Consider then, further, that the same Lord Jesus Christ, who bought it with his blood, has also the disposal of it; is ready to bestow it on you; has promised, if you will but ask, to give it to you. Ask then, that you may have. Slight not the proffered mercy. Pray that your hearts may be established with grace. Despise not a blessing so dearly purchased, so freely offered, so greatly needed: a blessing, which may be procured on

terms so easy. Had the Lord commanded you to do some great thing for the attainment of this Gift; even then, would not wisdom, would not interest, would not a regard for your immortal soul, have dictated a compliance with a prescribed condition? How much rather then, when he only saith unto you, "Seek and ye shall find?" Will it not be an agonizing thought throughout eternity to reflect, that there was once a time, when the Gift of God was within your reach, but that you wickedly neglected to apply for it: that Christ, from a tender concern to your spiritual good, counselled you to pray to him for the Spirit, but that you set at naught all his counsels? How insupportable will be this reflection! God grant, my brethren, that you may never experience it! In this your day, may you know the things which belong unto your peace! May you know the Gift of God, and who it is that speaketh unto you from heaven, that, asking in humble, faithful, persevering prayer, you may receive from him "living water, springing up into everlasting life!"

SERMON XXXII.

On the Danger of being Corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS, xi. 3.

But I fear lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ.

ST. PAUL had preached the gospel at Corinth, and had planted there a very flourishing church. But after his departure false teachers arose, who, under color of superior wisdom and eloquence, undermined the apostle's influence, and introduced many divisions and irregularities. To counteract these mischiefs was his leading design in the two epistles which he wrote to the Corinthians: in the

latter of which especially, we find him, with this view, asserting very strongly his authority as an apostle of Christ, and contrasting his own gifts, labors, and conduct, with the pretences of these self-appointed ministers. On this subject indeed he entered unwillingly. Self-commendation, he admitted, was in general a mark of folly. But the circumstances of the case, at that time, required it of him. He therefore entreats the Corinthians, at the beginning of the chapter before us, "to bear with him a little in his folly;" to tolerate this seeming impropriety in his conduct. "For," he adds, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy." He was agitated by a variety of anxious hopes and fears on their account. On one side he had been the blessed instrument, in the hand of God, of persuading them to embrace the Christian faith: and it was his highest ambition and most fervent desire to present them to Christ at last, "holy, unblameable, and unreprieveable in his sight.—For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ." But on the other side, his hopes were damped by chilling apprehensions. He contemplated the dangers to which his converts were exposed, and trembled for their safety. "I fear," he subjoins in the text, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ."

This tender solicitude which the apostle here manifests for the Corinthians, will in some measure be felt by every faithful minister for the people committed to his charge. He will be "jealous over them with a godly jealousy." While he longs for their salvation "in the bowels of Jesus Christ," he will be justly alarmed at every thing, which may tend to weaken their love to Christ, to alienate their heart from him, or to defile them either in body or soul. While he anxiously surveys the snares with which they are surrounded, he will be filled with fears for their preservation. And if these fears on their account should occasionally betray him into any conduct, which may have the appearance of folly, they should learn notwithstanding to bear with him, and to behold in it a proof of his love to them, and of his zeal for the glory of God. The particular grounds of alarm may not at all times be exactly the same; but so long as the enemy watcheth to sow tares among the wheat,

sufficient grounds will never be wanting for exciting a minister's apprehensions in behalf of the objects of his care, and for leading him to fear, with St. Paul, "lost by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so their minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ."

Having thus shewn the connection of these words with the context, and having briefly intimated the application of which they admit, I shall proceed to enlarge on two particulars, which they offer to our consideration.

I. On the nature of true religion as it is here described, "the Simplicity that is in Christ."

II. On the danger to which Christians are exposed, of being corrupted from that Simplicity.

I. Simplicity is the essence and the ornament of the Christian character. It implies an open and artless disposition, free from all deceit and hypocrisy; such as our Lord ascribes to Nathaniel, when he says of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."* It denotes a holy inability to plan, or to accomplish any evil design, such as St. Paul recommends to the Corinthians on another occasion, when he exhorts them, "In malice be ye children:"† and to the Romans, when he says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."‡ It comprehends an humble and a teachable mind, divested of prejudice and pride; a plain and an unaffected behavior, exempt from vanity and ostentation; and a singleness of heart towards God, such as David aspired after when he prayed, "Unite my heart to fear thy name;"§ in opposition to that *double-mindedness* condemned by St. James, which aims at combining contrary interests, at serving at the same time both God and Mammon.

But further, "the Simplicity that is in Christ" may be understood more especially to denote that Simplicity of dependence on Him, and of obedience to the Divine Law, which his religion prescribes.

Simplicity of dependence on Christ is one of the distinguishing features of the true Christian. All other persons place their dependence on some other foundation; on some quality, or supposed excellence in themselves; on their own wisdom and prudence; on the goodness of their own heart;

* John, i. 47. † 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Rom. xvi. 19. ‡ Psalm lxxvi. 11.

on their own strength and resolutions ; on the merit of their services, at least on the sincerity of their obedience. Or if they do take Christ into their scheme, and build upon him, yet they build upon him only in part, in conjunction with some of these other foundations. They build on Christ, and on themselves too ; and in some degree will share with him in the honor of their salvation. But the true Christian depends on Christ alone. He builds on this foundation, and on no other besides. It is on Christ's merits alone, and not on his own, either in the whole or in part, that he relies. He "has no confidence in the flesh." He trusts not to his own wisdom ; for he knows it to be foolishness. He trusts not to his own heart ; for he knows it to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." He trusts not to his own strength ; for he knows it to be weakness. He trusts not to his own righteousnesses ; for he knows them to be "as filthy rags." On Christ alone he builds with a pure, unmixed dependence. To Christ alone he looks "as of God made unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."* He has innumerable sins which need forgiveness, and he feels that he cannot stand before God in judgment ; but he relies with full security on the faithful declaration, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,"† He has many difficulties to be surmounted, many enemies to be encountered, many lusts to be subdued ; but he confides on the promise of his Lord, "My grace is sufficient for thee."‡ In short, he exclaims with the psalmist, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God : I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."§

Simplicity of obedience is another distinguishing feature of the true Christian. As he takes the promises of God for his dependence, so he takes the precepts of God for his rule. He does not presume to call in question the reasonableness, the propriety, or the justice of any of the divine commandments. He does not search out for arguments to justify his neglect or his violation of them. He does not plead the strictness of the law, the strength of the temptation, or his own weakness, as any excuse for his disobedience, or any extenuation of his guilt. It is his prevailing endeavor and constant prayer, that no regard to his own pri-

* 1 Cor. i. 30. † 1 John, i. 7. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9. § Psalm, lxxi. 16.

vain ease or interest, no fear of the reproach or ridicule of the world may deter him from a conscientious discharge of his duty. His judgment is liable to error ; but his heart is right with God. He may not always clearly discern the path which he ought to choose ; but when this is once discovered, be it thorny, rough, and steep, he hesitates not to follow it. Of this simplicity of obedience we meet with a beautiful illustration in the history of Abraham. When God commanded him to offer up his son, how many excuses might he have alleged for disobeying, at least for contesting or explaining away, the divine command. Isaac was his son, his only son, whom he loved ; the child of promise ; nay the child, of whom God had declared, that in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Then, how cruel and unnatural the act ! Should a father put his own son to death ? What had Isaac done to merit such a treatment ? What pleasure could the Almighty experience in thus doing violence to the natural feelings of his creatures ? What profit or glory could He derive from such an instance of obedience ? Nay, would not the lustre of His great perfections be tarnished and dishonored, if one, who was His professed and distinguished worshipper, should be guilty of so atrocious a deed ? These and many other pleas might the patriarch have urged, had he been inclined to disobedience. But, convinced that the injunction came from God, he sought no further. He left it with the Lord to fulfil his promises, to vindicate his own perfections. The duty of the creature was not to question, but to obey : not to raise objections to the divine command, but to execute the assigned commission. What a striking contrast to this Simplicity of obedience, does the example of Saul, in after-ages, exhibit ! The Lord commands him to " go and smite Amalek, and utterly to destroy all that they have, and to spare them not."* The command is positive. What is the conduct of the king ? Does he simply obey the mandate ? No. His obedience is partial and defective ; and plainly shews that he consults his own vanity and interest more than he regards the divine injunction : for he spares Agag, the king, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that is good, and destroys them not. When charged by the prophet Samuel with this failure in his duty, he

* 1 Samuel, xv. 3.

endeavors to extenuate his own guilt by throwing the blame on the people ; and justifies the violation of the orders which had been given to him, on the pretence, that the cattle, which should have been utterly destroyed, had been spared for the purpose of sacrificing unto the Lord. The very excuse which he urges detects the duplicity of his heart, and calls for this animated reproof from the prophet. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry ; because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."*

The preceding remarks illustrate the nature of true religion as it is described in the text. Before we proceed farther, let us inquire, does *our* religion correspond with this description ? Have we attained to that Simplicity of heart and life which distinguishes the true Christian ? Have we renounced every vain and carnal dependence ? Are we simply relying on the merits of Christ for acceptance ; on his grace, for strength and holiness ? Do we take the whole of the divine law, so far as we understand it, for the rule of our practice ? Are we ready to surrender on all occasions, do we surrender whenever an occasion arises, our own inclinations to the command of God ? My brethren, if after the most careful investigation you have good reason to hope that such is the state of your heart, bless God who hath done such great things for you. Presume not however on present appearances. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Be not high minded, but fear." Fear lest by any means you should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ. Such fears the apostle entertained for his beloved Corinthians. Such fears your ministers entertain for you. Such fears then entertain for yourselves. Deem not the caution unnecessary. Think not, because your mountain be strong, that therefore it can never be removed. Confidence of this kind can proceed only from ignorance of the dangers with which you are surrounded. Give me then your serious attention, while I proceed to enlarge on this particular.

* 1 Samuel, xv. 22, 23.

II. The danger to which true Christians are exposed, of being corrupted from their Simplicity, arises from the assaults of their spiritual adversary. Over the rest of mankind he rules with absolute and undisturbed dominion. They are "taken captive by him at his will," and do his work without resistance. But the servants of Christ are subjects of another kingdom. They have renounced the usurped authority of Satan. They have cast off his yoke; are opposing his government; are setting his power at defiance. Against these therefore his utmost fury is directed. Disappointed ambition, wounded pride, envy, and revenge, all concur in actuating him to leave no means untried which may work their ruin. Nay, by reducing them to allegiance, not only will his malice be gratified, but the interests of his kingdom will be most effectually promoted. "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." Their guilt will be greater. Their return will be less probable than their original conversion. Or if they should at length be recovered out of the snare, yet much shame and grief must be incurred; much of their comfort, peace, and usefulness, must be destroyed. To others, the effects of their fall will have been scarcely less prejudicial than to themselves. Many may have been seduced by their example. Many weak Christians may have been offended. Many opposers of the truths may have been hardened in their opposition. While the enemies of the Lord will have taken occasion to blaspheme, and will not have failed to magnify this defeat of the servants of Christ, into a victory gained over Christianity itself. We cannot wonder then that these should be the principal objects of Satan's assaults; that his chief exertions should be employed to corrupt them from the Simplicity that is in Christ.

But it is not merely from the enmity with which the adversary assaults us, but from the mode in which his assaults are conducted, that the greatest danger arises. It is not his fury, so much as his subtilty, which is to be dreaded. This was the main ground of the apostle's fears for the Corinthian converts. "He was not ignorant of Satan's devices." He knew the wiles as well as the malice of the

tempter. These wiles, these devices, had been too successfully practised against our first parents. "The serpent had beguiled Eve by his subtilty." And what was his present conduct toward the Corinthians, but a repetition of the same subtilty ; a counterpart of the same artful and insidious devices ? Had he formerly transformed himself into a serpent ? He had now transformed his ministers into ministers of righteousness. "The false apostles, deceitful workers," who assumed the title of the apostles of Christ, and by their pretensions to superior talents had ingratiated themselves with the people, were but instruments in the hands of this arch deceiver, by which he was secretly carrying on his destructive designs. And with what fatal success these destructive designs had been hitherto crowned, the divided and disorderly state of the Corinthian church, which may be collected from these epistles, too plainly evinces.

Here then, my brethren, survey your danger. The same malicious and subtle adversary plans your ruin. Though at present he may not put on exactly the same form which he then assumed, though he may not employ precisely the same instruments to which he formerly had recourse, think not that his machinations have ceased. There are a thousand forms which he can assume ; there are a thousand instruments which he can employ. He knows how to point his attacks in every possible direction ; he can avail himself of every possible variety of situation and of character. Though he may not assail you with direct and open hostility, yet conclude not that his designs against you are relinquished. They are his secret and his subtle attacks which you have most reason to fear. He probably will not tempt you at once to renounce your simple dependence on Christ, or avowedly to rush into disobedience to the divine commands : But he will labor imperceptibly to alienate your affections from God, and to conduct you to the same degree of criminality by a more covert and circuitous road. He will watch the most favorable opportunities of commencing and of renewing the assault. He will warily adapt his temptations to the peculiarities of your disposition and circumstances. He will aim to accomplish his object by flattering your pride, by insinuating into your mind hard thoughts of God, or by leading you to presume on your Christian liberty.

As a farther elucidation of the subject, and as a specimen of the insidious manner in which Satan prosecutes his attempts, it may be profitable summarily to consider the example adduced in the text. The artful, but successful steps by which he beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, and persuaded her to eat the forbidden fruit, will afford matter of serious and instructive contemplation. Having watched his opportunity of assailing her, when she was alone, at a distance from Adam, who might have protected her, and in the full confidence of innocence, suspecting no evil, the enemy opened the attack, with proposing to her the following question; "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" There was nothing in these words which apparently could excite alarm: but their secret tendency was most mischievous and fatal. They were calculated to inspire the bosom of Eve with doubts of the reasonableness and the certainty of the divine prohibition; to instil into her a spirit of repining and discontent; to lead her to conceive unfavorable sentiments of the goodness and equity of God. 'Can this intelligence which I have heard be true? Have any restrictions been imposed upon you with respect to the trees of the garden? Can God have acted in so unkind, not to say so unjust a manner, as to have furnished you with objects suited to the appetites which he hath implanted in you, and then to have debarred you from the enjoyment of them by so capricious and cruel a restraint? Surely you must have mistaken the nature of the command, or I must have been misinformed as to the existence of it.'

Finding by her reply to this insidious inquiry, that the poison was beginning to operate, the adversary hastens to improve his advantage, by denying that any danger would attach to disobedience. God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And so long as the woman gave full credit to this denunciation, she would resist all the assaults of the tempter. Here then his next attack was to be levelled. In opposition to the divine threatening he says, "Ye shall not surely die." 'It is not so certain that you shall die for this offence as you seem to think. God is too merciful and too just to punish so slight a transgression (if indeed it be a transgression) with so heavy a punishment. Nay, it is certain that you shall not die. I know you shall not die; and you need not distrust my word.'

Having thus allayed her fears with promises of impunity, he attempts to excite her desires after the forbidden fruit, by hopes of some great and fancied excellence contained in it: "God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." 'Disobedience, far from entailing punishment, will be followed with the most advantageous consequences. The taste of that fruit will impart to you wisdom and knowledge, of which you can now form no conception. Improved by its invigorating qualities, your intellectual faculties will become enlarged and infinite, like those of God himself. No wonder that he attempts to preclude you from partaking of a tree, which he knows will render you independent of his power, and wise, and great, and happy as himself.'

Such was the subtilty employed on this memorable occasion. My brethren, while you deplore the success of it, profit by the instructions vouchsafed. It is written for your admonition. It exhibits, if not a model of every temptation which may befall you, yet a specimen at least of those insidious wiles, which Satan practises for your destruction. Suffer then a word of exhortation, while I suggest some seasonable cautions on a matter so intimately connected with your present peace and future happiness.

1. Be watchful. Bear constantly in mind the dangers to which you are exposed. Remember the malicious and subtle enemy with whom you are engaged. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." Be not lulled into a false security. Never are the designs of Satan more likely to succeed, than when they are least suspected, and least dreaded. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." Especially distrust your own heart. Presume not on the innocency and goodness of your intentions. Be on your guard, as one who harbors a traitor within his bosom. "Take heed, brethren, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

2. Add to watchfulness prayer. Unaccompanied by prayer, watchfulness will prove insufficient for your safety. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." "Put on the whole armor of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching there-

unto with all perseverance." There never was an instance of religious declension, which, if it did not wholly originate in the neglect of prayer, was not at least attended with coldness and formality in the performance of it. "Continue then instant in prayer, fervent in spirit," and Satan shall not get advantage over you.

3. Never question the reasonableness or the certainty of the divine commands. Suggestions of this nature may frequently arise in your minds : but suffer them not to continue there. To reason about the lawfulness of sin, is to give place to the devil, who will not fail to improve his advantage. "Resist him, and he will flee from you." Had Eve dismissed with abhorrence these first insinuations, she had repelled his attack, and had retained her Simplicity. Let, "It is written," be a reply to every doubt. Against the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, the enemy is unable to contend.

4. Never be induced to believe that God will retract his threatenings. Let this bar be once removed, you know not, like Eve, into what lengths of sin you may be hurried. Listen then to no such dangerous and delusive notions. Oppose the shield of faith to this fiery dart of the wicked. "Hath God said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

5. Never permit your thoughts to settle with delight on any forbidden object. This was Eve's third fault. She suffered her mind to dwell on the fancied advantages of disobedience. And this criminal indiscretion was the forerunner of her fall. "When she saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." If you follow the steps by which she fell, you cannot but fall like her. Beware then of indulging sinful speculations. Is any unlawful object presented to your mind? "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. Make a covenant with your eyes that you may not look upon evil."

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Remember, that while you are using these precautions, these means of safety, your security at

last depends on Christ alone. He only can preserve you steadfast in that Simplicity, wherein your privilege and happiness consist. Place your soul then in his keeping. Pray to him to uphold your goings in the way that your footsteps slide not. Pray to him to impress upon your hearts such a deep, an abiding, a cordial conviction of his infinite value, and of your own entire need of him, that whenever you may be tempted, "by any means," to depart from him, you may be ready to exclaim with the apostle, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." May these prayers be answered! May "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you!" May he "keep you by his power through faith unto salvation!" May he guide you in safety through all the perils and temptations of this mortal life; preserve you from the snares of the devil; and at length "present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy!"

SERMON XXXIII.

Christ's Yoke an easy Yoke.

MATTHEW, xi. 30.

For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.

THERE are two different aspects under which religion is frequently exhibited by persons who are unacquainted with its true nature. On the one hand, it is represented as a hard and an unprofitable service, which exposes those who embrace it to many painful trials, without providing any adequate compensation for the sacrifices which it requires. On the other hand, it is described as a pleasant and an easy path, where uninterrupted delights abound; where no obstacles impede, no inconveniences annoy. But these representations are as injurious to the real

interests of Christianity as they are false in themselves. Many persons are deterred from making trial of a religious course through apprehension of the attendant difficulties ; while others, allured by the inviting prospects set before them, are discouraged at the first impediments in their way, abandon their profession in disgust, and "walk no more with Christ."

Highly important then is it, that those to whom the ministry of the Gospel is entrusted, should state with clearness and precision the real nature of religion ; that by no undue exaltation or depression of its favorable or unfavorable circumstances, they either occasion disappointment or excite offence. Truth, in the present instance, as in most other cases, lies in the mean between the two extremes. Each of the representations, noticed above, contains some portion of just delineation ; but each has a mixture of exaggeration and falsehood. Though Christianity exposes its followers to many trials, is it therefore a hard or an unprofitable service ? The experience of every true Christian, no less than the plainest testimony of Scripture, directly contradicts this inference. Though the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, are they therefore free from all tribulation and conflict ? The same experience, the same testimony, are equally opposed to this conclusion. What then is the real fact ? The Gospel of Christ undertakes to secure the happiness of its followers, notwithstanding every difficulty which they may be summoned to encounter. It promises to bless us with peace and joy, even amidst the most afflicting dispensations. It does not propose to exempt us from trials, but it engages to make us more than conquerors by the abundant support and consolation which it administers.

Such is the view of the subject exhibited in the text. Our blessed Lord, in the preceding verses, having asserted in very memorable language his own personal and mediatorial dignity, had proclaimed that most gracious invitation, so worthy of all men to be received ; "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Apprehensive, however, that the nature of his offer might be misunderstood, he immediately adds, "Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me." The rest which he promised to them did not consist in a freedom from all re-

strait. There was a Yoke which they must carry. There was a discipline to which they must submit. There was a burden which they must bear. How then could they find rest unto their souls? He subjoins in the text, "For my Yoke is easy, and my burden is light." If they were willing to become his disciples, they must carry his Yoke; but they would find by experience that it was an easy Yoke. They must bear the burden which he should lay on them; but they would find upon trial that it was a light burden.

It is this interesting truth which I purpose to explain and illustrate. But since the limits of a single discourse will not admit of that ample discussion which the importance of the subject demands, I shall confine myself on the present occasion to the former clause of the text; and shall reserve the latter for a future consideration.

"My Yoke is easy."

Christians are under the Yoke. They are not their own masters, at liberty to act as they please; to follow their own inclinations. They are the servants of Christ. What then is the Yoke which he imposes on them? It is obedience to his commandments. These commandments are in substance the same with the moral law of God. The servants of Christ, though free from the condemning power of the law, are not discharged from their obedience to the precepts of the law. Though no longer depending for acceptance with God on their own moral performances, they are "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."* They receive the law from the hands of Christ as the rule, to which all their actions, thoughts, and tempers must be conformed; as the rule, by their conformity to which their final state will be adjudged, and their future rewards proportioned. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea we establish the law."† The doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, far from weakening the obligations to morality, increases them tenfold. An unceasing endeavor to fulfil the whole law of God is the most unequivocal expression of love to Christ, and an indispensable evidence of an interest in his merits. "If ye love me keep my commandments. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us,

* 1 Cor. ix. 21. † Rom. iii. 31.

that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*

Such is the Yoke which Christ imposes on his followers. But is this an easy Yoke? Is obedience to the holy law of God an easy service? On the contrary, are not all the natural inclinations of man directly opposed to the spiritual duties which it enjoins? Do not the very expressions frequently employed in Scripture to denote the nature of Christian obedience, convey the plainest intimations of its difficulty? When we are taught by Him who "knew what was in man," that compliance with his precepts would on many occasions prove as painful to us as the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye; when we are directed by the same Divine Teacher and his apostles to "deny ourselves, to mortify our members which are in the body; to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;" can we doubt whether obedience to the holy law of God be a difficult service; St. Paul expressly declares, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be."† What does experience testify? If the Yoke of Christ's commandments be an easy Yoke, why do we not uniformly find it such? Why do we not readily submit to it? Why do we complain of its severity? If conformity to the divine precepts be agreeable to our natures, whence arises that general propensity to substitute empty forms in the room of practical godliness? Whence proceeds that indisposition to spiritual exercises? Why are religious duties so often esteemed a weariness? Surely these things prove, that the service of Christ is a service offensive to our natural hearts; a service in which we find no pleasure, and encounter much opposition.

But, says our blessed Lord in the text, "My Yoke is easy." How can we reconcile these seeming contradictions? In what respects, consistently with the preceding statement, can the Yoke of Christ be called an easy Yoke?

It may be called an easy Yoke in comparison with those Yokes, some of which must otherwise be endured. Our Saviour might, probably, in the first instance, have in view the servitude of the Jewish law, which his religion was intended to supersede. The painful rites, the expensive offerings, the wearisome ceremonies, and the mysterious dark-

* John, xiv. 15. xv. 14. Titus, ii. 11, 12. † Rom. vii. 7.

ness of that economy, altogether formed a Yoke which St. Peter, addressing the apostles and elders, declares, "neither their fathers nor they were able to bear."* In reference then to this Yoke, the Yoke of Christ may be called an easy Yoke. The simple institutions, clearer light, and comparative freedom of the Christian dispensation fully justify this language. Hence St. Paul exhorts the Galatian converts, who were beset with Judaizing teachers, to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the Yoke of bondage."†

The Yoke of Christ is easy in comparison with the Yoke of Satan. The work of sin is more congenial to our evil natures, than the work of God; but is it therefore easier? Look at the miserable slaves whom Satan leads captive at his will. With what unremitting assiduity do they pursue their several schemes of avarice, of pleasure, of ambition, of lust, of interest! They "rise up early, and late take rest;" they toil and labor in the service of their imperious master. But is this service easy? Ask them are they happy? Do they find no thorns in the way wherein they travel? Are tempers soured, are appetites inflamed, are wishes disappointed, no interruptions to their happiness; Have they peace within? Can they look backward with satisfaction, forward with hope? Are there not moments, in which they are constrained to feel their wretchedness and to lament their shameful servitude? But such are not the feelings of Christ's servants. Far from repenting of the paths which they have chosen, they find them to be paths of pleasantness and peace. "Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."‡ In tempers rectified, in affections regulated, in expectations realized, in an approving conscience, in a hope full of immortality, they experience an inward serenity of mind, which the slaves of Sin and Satan never know.

The Yoke of Christ is easy in comparison with the Yoke which self-righteousness imposes on mankind. Painful and oppressive indeed is the servitude which those endure who seek to justify themselves by their obedience to the divine commandments. They are laboring at a work, of which every fresh attempt only increases the difficulty, and ex-

* Acts, xv. 10.

† Gal. v. 1.

‡ Psalm, cxix. 165.

poses more clearly the folly. Serving a master, whom in their hearts they regard as a merciless tyrant and an unrelenting judge; professing to obey a law, which they secretly condemn as unreasonably strict, oppressive, and unjust, they are the victims of a slavish and tormenting fear. Their service is the service of constraint. Their obedience is the obedience of terror. Every new discovery of the holiness of God, and of the spirituality of his law, tends only to call forth afresh their latent enmity, to dispirit their exertions, to augment their disquietude. Dissatisfied with their own proficiency, conscious of their numerous defects, and trembling at the awful consequences, they drag on their chains heavily from day to day, and find no rest to their souls.

Compared with this state of bondage, the Yoke of Christ is easy, and his service perfect freedom. Blessed are his people, for they walk in liberty. Convinced of the impossibility of procuring acceptance on the merits of their own obedience, they abandon the attempt. Having been taught to look unto "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," they receive him as "of God made unto them righteousness." And thus "being justified by faith they have peace with God."* Their surety has satisfied the demands of the law for them. They are accepted in the Beloved. They are complete in Him. The law may threaten. The adversary may accuse. But "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."†

But further, Christ's Yoke may be called an easy Yoke, not only as compared with other Yokes, but as it is really made easy in itself to those who wear it. Notwithstanding the natural opposition of their hearts to God, Christ renders obedience familiar and pleasant to his followers. But how does he accomplish this important end? Not as some have inconsiderately supposed, by lowering the standard of obedience, by modifying the substance of the divine commandments in accommodation to the corrupt inclinations and sinful infirmities of fallen man; but by communicating to his people a new and holy nature, and thus by fitting them for the spiritual services for which they are designed.

* Rom. x. 4. v. 1. 1 Cor. i. 30. † Rom. viii. 34.

He provides them with new motives to obedience ; imparts to them new strength ; infuses into them heavenly dispositions ; by the sight of his cross breaks the power of sin in their souls ; writes his law in their hearts ; puts his Spirit within them ; and by these effectual operations, causes them to walk in his statutes with comfort and delight.

“ If any man be in Christ he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; all things are become new.”* Constrained by a sense of redeeming love, the true Christian liveth no longer to himself. Whatever might have once been the enmity of his heart to God and holiness, he is now the willing servant of Jesus Christ : he yields himself unto God, as one that is alive from the dead ; and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Great and glorious is the change which grace has wrought in his soul. What is now the object of his most fervent desires ? To spend and to be spent for Christ’s sake, in his service, to his glory. What is now the language of his heart ? “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits which he has done unto me. O Lord, thou art my God, early will I seek thee.” What is now the subject of his lamentation ? Not the holiness and severity of the divine law ; but his own indisposition and inability to fulfil it. He “ delights in the law of God after the inward man.” Far from desiring to be released from obedience to any of its precepts, he would gladly comply with all its most extensive and spiritual demands. He exclaims with David, “ Lord, how I love thy law. Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it. Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” What are now the sources of his highest pleasure ? Those very employments which he formerly accounted the severest mortifications. With what thankfulness does he welcome the returning sabbath ? With what delight does he contemplate the glorious truths of revelation ? Attendance on public ordinances, the exercises of prayer and praise, religious society and pious meditation, now constitute the very joy of his heart. “ One day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand. He would rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Of what does he

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

now complain? Of the Yoke of Christ? No. For he finds it easy. It is the Yoke, which he rejoiceth to wear: the Yoke, which no earthly object can tempt him to exchange: the Yoke, in submission to which he experiences present happiness, and looks for future glory.

Such is the view of Christianity exhibited in the text, so far as it has been unfolded. By way of improvement, it may be applied for the correction of two prevailing errors of considerable magnitude, which, though they have been slightly noticed in our progress, require distinct and pointed animadversion. This application of the subject indeed is more necessary, inasmuch as the words before us are sometimes adduced in support of the errors in question.

On the one side, there are some who maintain, that the freedom of the Gospel is a freedom from all moral restraint. Mistaking the nature of that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and considering it as a deliverance, not only from the sentence, but from the precepts of the law, they represent every exhortation to holiness as an infringement of their Christian privileges; every reference of practical duties to the standard of the divine commandments as legal, and "gendering to bondage." 'We are free,' they cry, 'we will not be brought under the power of any. The Yoke of Christ is easy. Love is the obedience which he requires of us. Love is the rule and measure of our duty. "We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held."'

Can such sentiments be justified. Love is indeed the principle of Christian obedience. But the principle cannot be the rule and measure of its own operations. It may give life to vigorous exertions; but without some regulating power to control their direction, they will be vague, inconsistent, and disorderly. Love itself, if left to act from the impulse of its own suggestions, without any precise mode of action prescribed to it, will degenerate into wild and irregular zeal. It stands in need of some fixed and determined rule of duty, by which its exercises may be restrained and modified. And where shall we meet with such a rule but in the precepts of the moral law? To set aside this rule, is to erect the private judgment of every individual into a standard of right and wrong, and thus, under the color of exalting Christian liberty, to introduce endless confusion.

Christ expressly declares in the text, that his service is a *Yoke*. He commands all who would come to him for rest and salvation, to take his Yoke upon them. Can those then be his servants, who, under pretence that his Yoke is easy, altogether reject it. The moral law is the law of his kingdom. In what respects then do such as refuse submission to this law differ from those "his enemies, who will not have him to reign over them?" In what respects will their punishment be different? "Bring them hither and slay them before me."

My brethren, are any of you infected with these pernicious and unscriptural notions! Be not deceived. Christ "came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. He has redeemed you from the curse of the law," but he has not absolved you from obedience to one tittle of its moral precepts. "Ye have been called unto liberty;" but mark the caution which the apostle subjoins, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh."* Beware how you resemble those "unruly and vain talkers, who profess that they know God, but in works deny him;" or those detested characters described by St. Peter, who, "speak great swelling words of vanity;" and "while they promise others liberty, themselves are the servants of corruption." If you are attempting to separate practical holiness from christian faith, you are attempting to put asunder two things, which God has inseparably united. And whence does your attempt originate? Not, as you imagine, from a zeal for Christ and for his Gospel; but from the carnal state of your own heart. You have no relish for his pure and spiritual commandments; therefore you "cast them behind your back." You hate his law, "because it doth not prophecy good concerning you, but evil." You secretly feel that it condemns your thoughts, your tempers, your practices, your intentions, your desires. You know that if conformity to his holy standard be the test of your interest in the Redeemer's blood, you must be forced to conclude against yourselves. Hence you seek to substitute new tests, new standards. Hence you trample on that law which the whole dispensation of the Gospel is intended to exalt. Hence you are led in fact to adopt the sentiments of the most determined adversaries of Christ: 'Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us.' You

* Gal. v. 13.

are yet in the flesh. Here lies the root of the whole evil. You have never experienced the renewing influence of divine grace. Pray then that your heart may be changed. Pray for deliverance from the Yoke of Sin and Satan. Pray to the Son to "make you free indeed," by putting his Spirit within you; "for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Seek to have the law written in your hearts; and you will then fully comprehend the meaning of the text, "My Yoke is easy."

But on the other hand, there is a contrary error into which still greater numbers fall. They talk of a mitigated law. They speak as if the great blessing, which the Gospel was intended to convey, is the introduction of a less rigorous and extensive rule of moral practice. Christian liberty, according to their views, consists not so much in a deliverance from the condemning power of the law, as in a partial exemption from the spiritual obedience which it enjoins. 'Man' (they cry) 'is weak, and God is merciful. He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are but dust. The yoke of Christ is easy. He has purchased for us easier terms of acceptance. In conformity to our fallen nature he has relaxed the severity of his demands; has established a milder code of laws, and will be satisfied with a far less scrupulous obedience. If we are but sincere, according to our abilities, our imperfect services, through the merits of our Redeemer, will be accounted for righteousness.'

Are such assertions to be tolerated? Are they less false and dangerous than the sentiments which have already been combatted? Mercy, no doubt, is one of the most glorious attributes of the Almighty. But he will never exercise it at the expence of his holiness and truth. The son of God undertook to "magnify the law and make it honorable." The opinions in question tend to degrade and vilify it. What do they advance as the standard of obedience? Not the holy and immutable law of the Creator, but the corrupt and changeable nature of the creature. Nay, every man's supposed ability becomes the rule of his moral practice. And where will the evils of such a system terminate? Let this rule be once established, and who is there that will be destitute of an excuse for sin? The more deeply the sinner has plunged into iniquity, the more fully he has incapacitated himself for obedience; the less obedience he will

be required to pay ; the greater indulgence he will experience.

My brethren, investigate this matter with attention. You will find that these notions of a mitigated law are most derogatory to the honor of God, most destructive to the practice of holiness. The advocates for this system, however they may disclaim the intention, are in fact subvertors at once of the law and of the Gospel. They are equally implicated in the charge of substituting new standards of obedience ; and thus far they eventually rank with the more open opposers of the law. Have any of you hitherto favored such opinions ? Examine the secret source from whence they sprang. You have probably ascribed them to worthy and honorable conceptions of the divine mercy and equity. You have perhaps regarded them as the offspring of a liberal and an unprejudiced mind. But you have been deceived. The real source has been pride, the unhumbled state of your heart. Refusing to "submit yourselves to the righteousness of God," you have been secretly attempting to establish your own righteousness. Though the Scriptures positively affirm, that "by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," you have been at the bottom indulging the presumptuous hope of saving yourselves by your works ; of "having whereof to glory before God." Hence has arisen your partiality for a mitigated rule. Finding that so long as the law retains its spiritual and extensive demands, you must despair of justifying yourselves by your obedience to it, you have been tempted to reduce its injunctions to a level with what you have conceived to be the measure of your own performances. You have erected an imaginary standard, adapted to your own corrupt propensities. You have taken up a cheap profession of religion. You have followed a mutilated rule of conduct, the creature of your own invention ; and this rule you have presumptuously styled the easy Yoke of Christ. Awake, my brethren, awake. Dissipate such delusive dreams. Banish pride from your hearts. "Submit yourselves unto God." Condescend to be saved through grace, and not of debt. Accept eternal life as the gift of God : a gift wholly unmerited, freely bestowed on you for Christ's sake, "without money and without price." Smite upon your breasts, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Contemplate the

sufferings of Emmanuel. See in them the holiness of his law exhibited. See in them the fulness of his mercy displayed. Strive to affect your hearts with the thoughts of his dying love. Say, 'For me, for me, the Son of God endured the bitter agony, the shameful cross. Shall I count his commandments grievous? Shall I requite his love by dishonoring that law which he died to magnify? "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost. O Lord, give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law." Help me to take thy Yoke upon me, for I shall find it easy. "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

Upon the whole, in the truth illustrated in the first clause of the text, we see exemplified that close connection, which invariably subsists between the precept and the promise, between the duty and the privilege. Take my Yoke upon you, for my Yoke is easy. Comply with the precept, and you shall experience the truth of the promise. The abundance of your peace shall be proportioned to the sincerity and extent of your obedience. The more heartily you apply your necks to the Yoke, the lighter shall you find it. "Be not then like to the horse and mule which have no understanding, whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle." Be not "as a bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke." Attempt not to ease your shoulder by drawing back from the pressure. Be patient. Be faithful. Press forward earnestly in the path assigned to you. Follow the Lord fully. "He shall feed you in a green pasture, and lead you forth beside the waters of comfort. You shall delight yourselves in the law of the Lord, and in keeping his commandments, shall have great reward."

SERMON XXXIV.

Christ's Burden a Light Burden.

MATTHEW, xi. 30.

For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.

IN a former discourse on these words, I adduced them as containing a correct and faithful delineation of the nature of true religion. In this respect they are highly important. They neither allure, by a specious exhibition of the pleasures which accompany Christianity, nor discourage by exaggerated representations of its attendant difficulties. They paint the service of Christ in its native colors, as it really is; a service not exempt, on the one hand, from trial and restraint, nor destitute, on the other, of consolations and delights peculiarly its own. Though it be a Yoke, it is an easy Yoke. Though it be a Burden, it is a light Burden. In this view we have already considered the former clause of the text. I now proceed, in a similar view, to propose the latter to your consideration.

"My Burden is light."

The servants of Christ have not only a yoke which they must carry, they have a Burden also which they must bear. What does this expression mean? What is the Burden which Christ imposes on his people?

Generally we may understand the term to imply, all those peculiar sufferings, labors, and afflictions, to which his service exposes those who follow it. It cannot be denied, it need not be dissembled, that the servants of Christ are called to encounter many heavy trials, from which other persons are free. The very images, under which Christianity is portrayed in Scripture, strikingly convey this truth. It is described as a "narrow way." It is characterized as a *race*, a *wrestling*, a *warfare*; doubtless in allusion to the difficulties and hardships with which the serious profession of it is accompanied. St. Peter, when speaking to Christians of their sufferings, expressly tells them, that "here-

unto they were called."* St. Paul asserts, that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God."† Christ himself affirms, "Whosoever does not bear my cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."‡

But it may be asked, in what particulars the Burden of Christ more especially consists? I reply,

1st. In the daily conflict which the Christian maintains with the sin that dwelleth in him. The power of sin in his heart, though broken, is not utterly destroyed. The body of death, though condemned and crucified, still continues to defile, to impede, to harass him. Too often does he find reason to lament that he cannot do the things which he would; that "when he would do good, evil is present with him." Too often has he occasion to complain, that though he "delights in the law of God after the inward man; yet he sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members."§ Corrupt propensities, which have long since seemed to be weakened, or even utterly subdued, at times resume their wonted force, and cost him many a painful struggle: while deadness of heart to the things of God, coldness of spiritual affections, wandering thoughts in prayer, and numerous unallowed transgressions, which escape all human observation, fill him with unaffected shame, and oppress his bosom with real sorrow.

2. In the hostile treatment which the Christian experiences from the world. It is the declaration of unerring truth, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."|| Let this declaration however be understood in a qualified sense. It is not intended that every true disciple of Christ is necessarily called to seal his faith with his blood, to be made with the apostles a spectacle to men and angels. And it must be admitted that some of that opposition and obloquy which Christians encounter, is often provoked by their own injudicious zeal, indiscreet singularities, and needlessly offensive conduct. At the same time they "are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them."¶ Their views, their maxims, their principles, are so directly opposite to those, by which the men of the world are actuated, that notwithstanding every lawful endeavor to obviate prejudice and to conciliate esteem, that enmity,

* 1 Peter, ii. 21. † Acts, xiv. 22. ‡ Luke, xiv. 27. § Rom. vii. 21, 22, 23. || 2 Tim. iii. 12. ¶ John, xv. 19.

which was originally put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, will secretly continue to operate. A variety of circumstances may concur to modify, to direct, or to restrain its operations; but still it will occasionally break forth, and betray the lurking venom. In beneficial designs perversely thwarted; in motives misrepresented; in conduct harshly judged, and uncharitably censured; in vilifying appellations, wantonly and reproachfully applied; the Christian will experience the hatred and opposition of the world. Even if resort be not had to weapons more open and violent, the malicious sarcasm, or the insulting sneer, will at times exercise his patience, and expose his fortitude to trial.

8. In the chastening which the Christian receives from his heavenly Master. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* The Christian is a scholar, whom Christ is training up for future glory. Already he is a partaker of the divine nature: the seed is sown in his heart; but much care and management are requisite to bring it to maturity. Already, he is "born again of the Spirit;" but much painful discipline must be endured, before the new-born babe "shall come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Hence severe rebukes, hence afflicting dispensations become necessary instruments in the hand of the Lord for correcting and proving his servants; for exercising and strengthening their graces; for weaning their affection from the world; and for gradually fitting their souls for that glorious inheritance which he has prepared for them.

Such is the Burden which Christ imposes on his followers. And is this a light Burden? Is daily conflict with sin, is hostile treatment from the world, is chastening from the hand of the Lord a weight easy to be borne? Do these accumulated trials constitute only a light Burden?

Yet Christ avers in the text, "My Burden is light." How can we reconcile these seeming inconsistencies? As the yoke of Christ is easy in comparison with those yokes, some of which must otherwise be borne; so is his Burden light in comparison with other Burdens, to which those who reject this Burden are exposed.

The Burden of Christ is light when compared with the

* Hebrews, xii. 6.

Burden of unpardoned sin in another world. Faint at present must be our conceptions of the unutterable anguish endured by those wretched spirits, on whom the divine vengeance is poured out without restraint. God forbid, my brethren, that we should ever know it by experience ! The Scriptures represent it by the most frightful images. We are told that "the wicked," those who die impenitent and unpardoned, "are turned into hell ;" that they "go away into everlasting punishment ;" that "they have no rest day nor night."* The Lord "hath laid them in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness, and in the deep. His indignation lieth hard upon them, and he vexeth them with all his storms." Not the heaviest trials to which the Christian is exposed, are to be compared with the torments which these miserable souls endure. How light would they esteem the Burden of Christ in comparison with those chains of darkness in which they are reserved unto the judgment of the great day ! Were it possible that time past could be recalled ; were it possible that offers could be made to them of once more inhabiting this earth, on the express condition of their becoming the servants of Christ, would they decline his service because of the sufferings attached to it ? Would they prefer their present torments to his Burden ? Nay rather with what transports of gratitude and joy would they embrace the offered mercy ; even though they were assured, that, from the cradle to the grave, they should encounter the most powerful conflicts with sin ; the utmost malice, scorn, and persecution from mankind ; and the most severe and afflicting corrections from their heavenly Master.

The Burden of Christ is light, compared with the Burden of unpardoned sin, even in this world. Observe the man whom the Lord hath "made to possess his former iniquities." What an intolerable load is he doomed to carry ! "He groans indeed, being burdened." By day, by night, in solitude, in company, he finds no rest to his soul. He flies to pleasure ; he plunges into business : but pleasure has lost its charms ; business can engage no longer. The sense of guilt still follows him. The wrath of his offended God hangs heavy upon him, and depresses his spirit with an almost insupportable sadness. How feelingly does David depict the misery of such a state. "Thine arrows, O Lord, stick

* Psalm, ix. 17. Mat. xxv. 46. Rev. xiv. 11.

fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger ; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long.”* Propose to a person thus heavy laden with a sense of sin and wrath, propose to him to exchange his Burden for that which the Christian undergoes ; will he reject the proposal ? Will he cry, ‘ The remedy which you offer is worse than the disease ? ’ No. ‘ Welcome sufferings, welcome trials ; if my sins are but forgiven. Compared with the load which I endure, any Burden will be light. O Lord, remove thy stroke away from me ; bind up my broken heart ; heal my wounded spirit ; impose on me whatever weight thy wisdom may appoint : and I will patiently and thankfully submit.’

But the burden of Christ is not only light in comparison with other Burdens, it is made light in itself to those who bear it. The real pressure of a load is to be ascertained, not by its intrinsic, but by its relative weight. It is heavy or it is light, in proportion to the degree of strength applied to it. The same Burden under which a child would sink, a man will sustain without inconvenience. What then is the case with the Christian ? Is he called to peculiar trials ? Peculiar supports are vouchsafed to him. Is his Burden heavy ? Proportionate strength is imparted to him. Weak in himself, he is “ strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.”† Exposed to afflictions from which others are exempt, he experiences a source of joy, with which others are unacquainted. “ As the sufferings of Christ abound in him, so his consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”‡ The encouraging sense of the presence and favor of his heavenly Lord ; the gracious promises of assistance and support ; the experience of mercies already received ; the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto him ; the cheering prospect of a glorious termination to all his difficulties ; the animating conviction that his present conflicts will eventually work together for his own good, and for the more perfect manifestation of the power and honor of his divine Redeemer ; all these enlivening cordials contribute to revive his drooping spirits, and to inspire

* Psalm, xxxviii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. † 2 Tim. ii. 1. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 5.

him with renovated vigor for the contest. "Looking unto Jesus," he not only "runs with patience the race that is set before him," but with his blessed Master, he "endures the cross, despising the shame:" with Moses, he "chooses to suffer affliction with the people of God:" with St. James, he "counts them happy which endure:" with St. Paul, he "is joyful in tribulation; glories in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him; takes pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake."* Where is now his Burden? Is it heavy? Does he feel it? Does he lament its weight? 'No,' he replies; "troubled on every side, I am not distressed; perplexed, I am not in despair; for my light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while I look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."†

Such is the view of religion exhibited in the latter clause of the text. The practical uses to which it may be applied are numerous and important. I proceed to select some few for our correction and edification.

There may be some of you who take offence at religion, because of the unpromising aspect, which in *your* eyes it assumes. You regard the service of Christ as a hard service; a service which imposes on you many painful labors, and offers no adequate return of profit, of pleasure of advancement. Whence do you derive such notions? Are they authorised by the word of God? Are they sanctioned by the declarations of those, who are best qualified to decide the question? The divine Author of Christianity himself asserts, "My Burden is light." The universal experience of his followers concurs in maintaining the assertion. Who are most commonly the persons that speak evil of the way of Christ, but such as themselves have never made trial of that way? Nay, how many even of these have eventually been compelled to acknowledge, that the load under which they labor is far less tolerable than the Burden which Christians bear? At the awful hour of death truth is likely to predominate. With eternity in view, the little objects which formerly engrossed attention lose their importance. What then, in that

* Heb. xii. 12. xi. 25. James, v. 11. 2 Cor. vii. 4. xii. 9, 10.

† 2 Cor. iv. 8. 17, 18.

solemn season, has been the usual language of mankind? Have any of those who have chosen Christ for their portion repented of their choice? Have they regretted the time as wasted and mispent, which they have employed in his service? Have they lamented that, in placing their happiness in religion, they have grasped only at the shadow, and have lost the substance? On the contrary, have they not uniformly testified, that "the yoke of Christ is easy, and his Burden light;" that "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace?" Can attestations equally decisive, can attestations possessed of any semblance of authority, be adduced in favor of the paths which you have chosen? Are these paths exempt from every Burden? My brethren, understand the question fully. Sin has a Burden as well as Christ. If you refuse to bear the one, you must endure the other. Which do you prefer? Which do you deem will prove in the end the lighter weight? Had you ever felt the Burden of unpardoned sin? I need not ask the question. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" *Who* "can dwell with everlasting burnings?" While there is time, amend your choice. Flee from the wrath to come. Close with the merciful offers of the Gospel. Choose Christ for your portion; you shall taste that he is gracious. Make trial of his ways; you shall find them to be pleasant. Take his Burden on you; you shall feel it to be light.

But are there not others among you who imbibe a contrary error; who are eagerly setting forward in a religious course, without any just apprehensions of the difficulties which attend it? Allured by the flattering representations, which an injudicious zeal too frequently obtrudes, which a warm imagination too readily credits, you look forward to nothing but to pleasure and delight. You expect no troubles, you fear no dangers. Conflict with sin, opposition from the world, chastening from the Lord, are interruptions to your peace, of which you entertain no suspicion. "Our sun will no more go down, neither will our moon withdraw itself." May the truth which has been illustrated, correct these unscriptural expectations! May it lead you to form a proper conception of the paths on which you are entering! My brethren, recollect that "the way of life is a narrow way." If you are the servants of Christ, there is a burden which you must bear. Think not, however, that by stating these

unpalatable truths, I mean to discourage your attempts, or to check your progress. As a faithful monitor, I would put you in remembrance of the things which belong to your peace. I would prevent that bitter disappointment in which your present mistaken views must infallibly terminate. I would spare you the shame and grief which must ensue, if, disheartened by unexpected difficulties, you should turn your backs in the day of battle; if, after having begun in the spirit, you should at last end in the flesh. Sit down then and count the cost. Be prepared for conflict. Be ready to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Was not the captain of your salvation made perfect through suffering? "He entered not into glory, but first he suffered." Without first sharing his sufferings, can you expect to share his glory? "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Remember that the present happiness which the Gospel promises consists not in exemption from troubles, but in support and consolation under them. Are you called to bear the Burden and heat of the day? "Be not weary and faint in your minds." Though you may be heavy laden, you shall not be overcome. The presence of your gracious Master shall sweeten your toil. His strength shall sustain your weakness. In the end you shall "be more than conquerors through him that loveth you."

But while the servants of Christ may expect to partake of the afflictions which that service entails, let us not hastily conclude that every affliction which befalls us is an indisputable evidence of our interest in Christ. Be not deceived. You may bear a Burden, and may call it the Burden of Christ? while, in fact, it has no pretensions to that name. Not every conflict with sin, not every act of opposition from the world, not every chastening from the Lord, will evince you to be the true servants of Christ. There may be much struggling about sin, in the mind, where there is no real principle of holiness in the heart. Few persons are so hardened in wickedness, as not occasionally to be troubled with convictions of guilt. The voice of reason will be heard and though it be ultimately silenced, will for a time create disturbance in the soul. And this struggle, between corrupt

inclinations on the one side, and the dictates of natural conscience on the other, is frequently mistaken for the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. But the hypocrisy of such characters may be easily detected. Their resistance against sin is, at the best, only partial and temporary. At the bottom, they favor the iniquity which they profess to oppose. While they contend against one sin, they are allowedly practising another. While they strive to suppress sin in their outward conduct, they secretly indulge it in the heart. But such a conflict forms no part of the Burden of Christ. My brethren, is your conflict with sin of a different nature? Is it universal? Is it unremitted? Do you strive against *all* sin? Do you seek to subdue sin in your thoughts as well as in your lives? Do you pray against it? Do you watch against it? Do you avoid every temptation to it? These are the marks by which you must determine your state.

Do you encounter opposition from the world? Examine the grounds from which this opposition arises. Is it not provoked by your own indiscretion or obstinacy, by your ungovernable passions, by your unchristian tempers? Call it not in this case the Burden of Christ. "Blessed" (says our Lord,) "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you *falsely* for my sake." But before you assume this blessedness as your own, consider whether you are justly entitled to it. Men may speak evil against you. But is it *falsely*? Have you not merited the censures which they cast on you? You may be reviled and persecuted. But is it **FOR CHRIST'S SAKE**? The apostle reminds us, that to suffer as a Christian is a far different thing from suffering "as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters."*

Are you chastened of the Lord? Presume not on this single evidence. Numbers are chastened of the Lord, whom he owns not for his children. It is not merely receiving correction that will prove your adoption into the family of God. With what dispositions do you receive it? Do you submit to it with patience? Do you endure it with resignation to the will of your Heavenly Father? Do you with gratitude and thankfulness kiss the rod as a mark of his pa-

* 1 Peter, iv. 13.

ternal mercy ? Can you say from the heart with pious Eli, " It is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good : " or with a greater than Eli, " O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done ? " Are you more desirous to have your afflictions sanctified, than to have them removed ? Is it the language of your soul, ' Lord, chasten me for my profit, that I may be partaker of thy holiness ? ' Let these inquiries be seriously applied to the heart ; and may the Lord give you grace to discover whether the Burden which you bear, be his Burden or not !

Lastly, the subject under contemplation very forcibly inculcates the exercise of mutual tenderness, forbearance, and support. My Christian brethren, are you all constrained to bear part of the same Burden ? Let fellowship in sufferings excite in you sympathy of affections. Partakers of the same afflictions, " be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another." Taught by experience to lament the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, be not severe in judging and condemning others. Magnify not every inadvertence, of which they may be guilty, into a wilful transgression. Brand not every false step, which they may happen to take, as a mark of hypocrisy. Extend to them that favorable indulgence, which you claim for yourselves. " Bear ye one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Encountering yourselves opposition from the world, and " knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren," add not to the weight which they endure, by unfriendly behavior or uncharitable language. Imitate not the conduct which you affect to deplore. Chastened yourselves of the Lord, learn to pity them that are chastened. Pray for them. Strengthen them. Comfort them. Break not the bruised reed. Quench not the smoking flax. Let identity of interests, of trials, of feelings, swallow up all trifling differences. Travelling the same road, exposed to the same difficulties, " see that ye fall not out by the way." By jealousies, by animosities, by divisions, increase not your own load, aggravate not each other's Burden. " Love as brethren ; be pitiful, be courteous, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." And " may the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means !"

SERMON XXXV.

The Danger of a Worldly Spirit, Illustrated in the History of Lot.

GENESIS, xix. 29.

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.

ONE great excellence of the sacred writings is the pleasing and interesting manner in which they convey instruction. Calling to their aid not precept only, but example, they set before us living pictures of the truth; and thus, by the events and characters recorded in them, illustrate and enforce the doctrines which they inculcate. Hence the historical part of the Old Testament is to be viewed not merely as a narrative of facts, which we are required to credit; but as a collection of practical information, which we are to study for our improvement. "All these things" (says St. Paul, speaking of the judgments which befel the Israelites in the wilderness,) "All these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

The chapter, from which the text is taken, abounds with much important instruction of this kind. It sets before us one of the most awful and signal instances of the destructive vengeance of God, which occur in the history of man. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the neighboring country, with their inhabitants, cattle, and various productions, were suddenly and irrecoverably destroyed. For "the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon them out of heaven, and overthrew them; and the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Do we inquire the cause of this dreadful judgment? It was Sin. "The men of

* 1 Cor. x. 11.

Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." God, by his prophet Ezekiel, has given us this further account of their sin. "Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom : pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters ; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy ; and they were haughty and committed abomination before me : therefore I took them away as I saw good."* They flourished in temporal prosperity : they lived in affluence and ease ; their land was to a very extraordinary degree fertile, "well watered every where even as the garden of the Lord." The consequence was, that they became proud, profane, and sensual. They were full, and forgot God ; abandoned themselves to fleshly lusts ; and plunged without restraint into the most abominable excesses. Such is at all times the natural effect of that worldly prosperity, which we are so prone to covet. Prosperity hardens the heart, deadens the conscience, and lulls the mind into carnal ease and indolence. And where there is abundance of idleness, there will soon be abundance of sin. How cheerfully then should we bear, and even welcome adversity ! How constantly should we remember that worldly disappointments may prove the greatest mercies ! Even the curse of barrenness, pronounced upon the earth in consequence of Adam's fall, is in reality a blessing. Man, instead of repining at the laborious task assigned to him, has reason to be thankful for it. "In the sweat of his face he eats bread : " but he is thus preserved from the commission of innumerable sins, into which plenty and idleness would not fail to hurry him.

From this signal destruction of the inhabitants of Sodom, we read of one person whose escape was no less remarkable. For God sent his angel to deliver him ; to warn him to flee from the devoted city, and to bring him into a place of safety. This person was Lot, the friend and nephew of Abraham. When the patriarch, at the command of God, left his native land, Lot had accompanied him, and afterwards sojourned with him a considerable time. He was a partaker also of Abraham's faith ; as St. Peter styles him, "a righteous man," one, who feared and worshipped God ; one, whom God therefore did not suffer to perish with his wicked neighbors ; but shewed, by his preservation, that the Lord know-

* Ezek. xvi. 49, 50.

eth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, as well as "to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

But what had so good a man to do in so impious a city? Was filthy Sodom the place in which we should have expected to find the righteous Lot? Surely it must have been necessity, not choice, which fixed his residence there. Alas! the truth is neither to be disguised nor palliated. Neither in this nor in any other instance, do the Scriptures attempt to conceal the occasional sins, and the false steps of the godly. With undeviating impartiality they recount the unbelief of Abraham, the drunkenness of Noah, the adultery of David. Nor is it without especial reason, that they are thus open and explicit. By these faithful exhibitions of human nature, when left to itself, they teach us what we are in ourselves: they shew that the most eminent saints stand not by their own strength, but solely by the gracious assistance of the Almighty: they admonish us that if we hope to stand at all it must be by the same assistance; that if we for a moment are left to our own hearts, we also shall undoubtedly fall. On the same ground they set before us the criminality of Lot, in selecting Sodom for his residence, and the worldly motives by which he was actuated in this improper choice.

The flocks and herds of Abraham and Lot were by the divine blessing so greatly multiplied, that "the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together." To remedy this inconvenience, and to prevent the strife which it occasioned between their herdsmen, the patriarch proposed a separation; and with a forbearance and condescension highly to be praised, submitted the course which they should follow to Lot's decision. "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right, and if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and journeyed east, and dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."* In this transaction, Lot was clearly guilty

* Gen. xiii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

of two great faults. As circumstances then stood, he should have submitted to any worldly loss, and should even have parted with all his cattle (had such a sacrifice been necessary) rather than have separated from Abraham. For the holy patriarch was particularly distinguished by the favor, the blessing, and the presence of the Almighty ; and at a time when almost the whole world was sunk in ignorance and idolatry, "He built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." Incalculable must have been the advantages of such society. Lot therefore, in leaving Abraham, and in foregoing the benefit of his religious example, conversation, and instructions, willingly relinquished a privilege, in comparison of which all the treasures of the world were of no value.

But if he would separate himself from Abraham, why would he go to Sodom ? In Sodom, not only were there no sabbaths, no public ordinances, no fear of God, but on the contrary, the most daring impiety, the most profane contempt of God, the most shameful and detestable licentiousness. Was this a place in which a religious man would choose to settle ? To Sodom would he look for connections for his children, for examples for his servants, for society for himself ? What were the motives of this unjustifiable conduct ? Worldly ease and interest. He considered not the matter in a religious light : But seeing the fruitfulness of the land, and the abundance of the pasturage, he took up his abode, regardless of all consequences, in wicked and idolatrous Sodom. Such policy could not be attended with success. What could be expected, but either that he should be abandoned of God to the natural result of his choice ; or that, if reclaimed, he should be reclaimed by exemplary chastisements ?

But while we clearly perceive the fault, and condemn the conduct and motives of Lot in this particular, are we not sensible that there are numbers who follow his example, sacrifice their religious interests to their temporal advantages, and at least run no inconsiderable risk of losing their immortal souls, from the foolish hope of providing something better for their perishable bodies ? How little do parents in general consult for the spiritual good of their children, in comparison of their worldly interest. In their choice of situations, of connections, of professions, on which are they

most ready to fix ; on those which offer the least temptations to sin, and the greatest opportunities of religious improvement, or on those which promise the largest share of riches and of honor? How often do we see persons, for the sake of a little worldly gain, preferring those callings and employments, which lead them to neglect the sabbath, bring them into the most pernicious company, and expose their souls to the greatest danger. How frequently do we see others, wilfully removing to a distance from the public ordinances of religion, with a view of cultivating their farm, or of pushing their trade with more advantage. How many servants are tempted to forsake a truly Christian master from an eagerness to better themselves in the world, and to seek for places in wicked and irreligious families, because their profit may be something more, or their labor a little less. Let all then, whatever be their station ~~for~~ life, who act on such principles, remember Lot in Sodom. Their motives and conduct are like his. Their intentions may be good. So probably were Lot's. They may think, as perhaps he thought, that they shall escape the dangers, which they must encounter. But they should recollect, that it is one part of the Christian's duty, not to lead himself into temptation : and that he seldom takes a false step without having reason to lament it in the consequences. Let us inquire whether there be any thing in the sequel of Lot's history to weaken the force of this assertion.

He soon had reason to repent his choice. A foreign army came up against Sodom ; took it, and, with the rest of the spoil, swept away Lot and all his goods. Thus was his own folly made the instrument of chastising him. He had chosen Sodom for the sake of his cattle ; and now, through that very choice, his cattle were carried away, and he himself was made prisoner. Such however was the divine mercy, that from this captivity he was quickly delivered by the prompt exertions of Abraham, who armed his servants, pursued and defeated the enemy, and brought back Lot and all his goods. We should have hoped that he had now received sufficient warning, and that, being alarmed by past calamities, he would either have returned to live with Abraham, or at least would have quitted Sodom, and sought out another habitation. But the same motives which dictated his first choice, led him to repeat it ; and, though he

had once escaped from Sodom, with augmented folly he returned to it again.

For some time, we hear not of any outward interruption to his happiness. His wealth, it is probable, increased. His flocks and herds were multiplied. His schemes of worldly prosperity were realized. Was he *therefore* happy? Did he experience the peace and enjoyment which he had fondly promised to himself? No. We have the authority of an inspired writer for saying, that his bosom was a stranger to happiness and to peace. "He was vexed" (says St. Peter) "with the filthy conversation of the wicked: for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."* Blessed be the grace of God, Lot retained his integrity. Notwithstanding his past misconduct, the Lord, amidst the general corruption, preserved him pure. Yet this very blessing multiplied the sources of his uneasiness. The more holy he was in himself, the more shocked he must be by the impurity of his ungodly neighbors: the deeper his sense of religion was, the deeper must have been his sorrow at their profaneness and impiety. The very circumstance of his standing alone amidst so many thousands, though in itself a peculiar favor, and a very astonishing instance of the power and grace of God, tended greatly to increase his difficulties, and to make his trials heavier. It more openly exposed him to the shafts of ridicule and reproach; probably betrayed him into many actions which his conscience disapproved; and in various ways checked his progress, damped his ardor, and lessened his comforts in religion. Could Lot then be happy? If his troubles had ended here, could he have had reason to be satisfied with the choice which he had made? Hitherto, however, we have stated only a small part of his vexation. He had to lament the sad effects of his criminal indiscretion upon others. He saw his servants gradually growing like the heathen, among whom they were mixed; his children forming irreligious connections; his wife herself infected with the contagion of the place. Here were unceasing causes of anxiety; sources of the keenest self-reproach. What comfort could the multitude of his cattle, or the fertility of his pastures, now afford him? They could not heal the wounds of conscience,

* 2 Peter, ii. 7, 8.

nor stifle the voice of reflection. They could not compensate for the loss of domestic happiness, of religious communion, of inward peace. With what heart-felt anguish and regret would he now call to mind the days of holiness and happiness, which he had passed in Abraham's family! What unavailing wishes would he daily form, that he had never set his foot within the walls of Sodom! How frequently would he long to turn his back upon the accursed place! But this step he had neither the courage nor the power to take. It is much easier to bring ourselves into difficulties than to escape from them. It is one of the sad effects of transgressing the bounds of duty, that it frequently bars up our return. Lot had entangled himself in Sodom, but could not extricate himself. Many causes conspired to involve him. The habits of life which he had contracted, remaining affection for his family, some flattering hopes of yet being of service to them, apprehensions of the scorn and obloquy, perhaps of the more decided opposition, which he must expect to encounter, all were obstacles to his removal. To overcome them required a degree of exertion, to which his mind, dispirited with anxiety, and weakened by indolence, was now unequal. He felt his chains, but had not strength to break them.

Surely as yet we can discover nothing in the history of Lot which can lead us to envy his happiness, or can tempt us to presume upon his example. The Lord, it is true, still remembered his servant, and when he overthrew the cities of the plain, at the intercession of Abraham, sent his angel to deliver Lot. But all the circumstances of that deliverance were calculated to make him feel more deeply the folly of his past misconduct. When he heard the word of the Lord, he believed it and thus gave evidence of his faith. But how many afflictions damped the joy of his escape! Suddenly was he called upon to leave the devoted city, to forsake for ever his houses, cattle, land, and to flee for his life. Severe at last must have been the pang of separation from numerous earthly comforts; from persons and places long familiar to his eyes, doomed now to certain ruin: perhaps from many children left behind, whom he had been the cause of involving in destruction. His wife, however, and two daughters, were the partners of his flight. Here was some ground of consolation, some little relief amidst

his complicated sufferings. But another, and that doubtless the most painful blow of all, awaited him. His wife, in direct violation of the divine command, looked back with regret towards Sodom. Instant judgment accompanied her disobedience. She was turned into a pillar of salt. If any thing was wanting to fill up the measure of Lot's anguish on this dreadful day, it must have been this terrible display of divine wrath on one, who was so nearly related to him, and who seemed to have been already snatched from the impending desolation.

Of the remainder of Lot's history, we know but little. But in that little there is nothing to excite our envy. He lived in poverty and obscurity : while the infamous conduct of his daughters (which plainly shewed how much their principles had suffered from their residence in Sodom,) must have opened afresh all their father's wounds. As we have the authority of the New Testament for affirming, that upon the whole he was a "righteous man;" so we conclude that he passed his latter years in deep humiliation and repentance. His sins were pardoned : but, unlike his kinsman Abraham, he was called to no important services. His early promises of usefulness were blasted by one fatal step, and as his life had been without credit, so his end was without glory.

The whole history of this unhappy man warns us in the most serious manner against a Worldly Spirit, bids us beware how in any single instance we abandon our religious interests for the sake of temporal advantages. We know not what may be the bitter consequences of one such fault. Worldly gain cannot compensate for the loss of inward peace. "What then will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Lot was saved. But he was saved by a miracle. He was plucked like a brand out of the fire. If you venture in his steps, can you presume to hope that similar grace and mercy will be vouchsafed to you? What in him was criminal indiscretion, in you, who have his example before your eyes, will be impious presumption. Survey the numbers that perished through his rashness; his wife, children, servants : and can you dare to build on the solitary instance of his preservation? Indulge not such a hope. So long as you are conscientiously walking in the path of duty, you must steadily rely on divine grace for support. But you are forbidden

to "tempt the Lord your God." You are forbidden to put yourselves into situations and places dangerous to your spiritual interest, and then to expect that he will preserve you in them. Much less can you have any well-grounded hope of divine assistance, if you are acting thus in order to live more comfortably in this world, or to lay up an increase of perishable treasures for your children. Dismiss all such vain imaginations. Make religion, what it must be, your chief concern. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." To religion let every thing else be sacrificed; otherwise you in fact give up religion altogether. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." If you are resolved to make this world, your grand object, you will forsake God; and probably he will forsake you; will abandon you to the lusts of your own heart; will leave you to perish in the Sodom which you have chosen. If to you, however, as to Lot, he should at length return in mercy, how severely shall you be taught the folly of the choice which you have made. "Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you. Choose ye therefore this day whom ye will serve." In God alone is safety, peace, and happiness; "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Choose then the Lord. Take him for your portion. Leave worldly people to their worldly gains. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord: and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. And I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Hitherto we have set forth this history for admonition; let us also apply it for encouragement. It teaches us that the Lord doth not forsake his people. Where grace displays its fruits, he will not overlook them. He observed, that Lot in Sodom was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, and owned him for his servant. He saw that the heart of Lot was very different from that of his ungodly neighbors, and distinguished him accordingly. He would not condemn the righteous with the wicked. Lot was but one, yet when Sodom was to be destroyed, an exception was made in his favor. Nay, the Almighty describes himself as unable to execute the fierceness of his wrath till Lot should be in safety. "Haste thee; escape

thither ; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither." What an abundant consolation to every sincere servant of God ; to all who serve him faithfully in the station in which he has placed them, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart ! Men may mistake their character, but God notices and approves it. The true Christian may be in poverty and obscurity, but the Lord does not overlook him. Surrounded by the ungodly and profane, he may stand single in his religious sentiments ; but he is not alone, for God is with him. He may be involved in difficulties and troubles, but the Lord will deliver him out of all. He may fear that he is forgotten and deserted, and shall at last be left to perish. But what says our Lord ? "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. No man is able to pluck them out of my hand." Be then of good courage, all ye servants of the Lord. Ye, who love Christ and his salvation, be not cast down, neither be ye dismayed. When the Lord shall come in righteous anger to execute judgment on a guilty world ; when the wicked shall be swept into hell, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire ; then shall ye be saved with an everlasting salvation. Not a hair of your heads shall be touched. "Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself ; for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

SERMON XXXVI.

On the DESIGN and DUTIES of the SABBATH.

MARK, ii. 27.

*And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for Man ;
and not Man for the Sabbath.*

THE influence of the Sabbath in restraining public immorality, and in promoting individual piety and holiness, is a fact capable of the fullest demonstration. If

to the practical good effects of this institution we add on the one hand the many express promises given in Scripture to the observance of this holy day, and on the other the repeated threatenings denounced against the violation of its sacred duties ; to every serious mind a generally increasing disregard of the Sabbath must prove a source of real concern and apprehension. Yet such an increasing disregard we are daily compelled to witness. Not only do numbers openly cast off all peculiar restraint on the Lord's day, and avowedly convert it into an occasion of worldly pleasure or occupation ; but even too many of those who profess to retain a religious respect for the Sabbath, shew by their general conduct and spirit throughout the day, that they entertain at best very defective and inadequate conceptions of the design and duties of this holy institution.

To direct our attention then to this subject, may prove, by the blessing of God, an interesting and useful employment of the present opportunity. In the text we have the declaration of One, who in the following verse assumes to himself the title of the Lord of the Sabbath : of One, therefore, from whose declaration on this point there can be no appeal. Jesus "said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." In discoursing on these words,

I. I shall state the information which they convey concerning the Nature and the End of the Sabbath.

II. From this statement I shall deduce some inferences, which respect both the Obligations to observe this Holy Day, and the Manner of observing it.

I. We are taught by the text that the Sabbath, or the appropriation of one day in seven, for a day of holy rest, is a positive institution. It was *made*. It did not result, like the precepts of the moral law, from the nature of things. To love the Lord our God with all our heart ; to worship him in spirit and in truth ; to devote to him our time, our talents, our services ; are duties which the perfections of God, and our relation to him must ever have required. But that any particular portion of our time should be more immediately assigned for the discharge of religious duties, or what that particular portion of our time should be, are points which nothing but a positive institution could determine. Nor is this an human institution. The Sabbath, we learn from

the text, was made not *by* man but *for* him. It was a divine appointment. God made the Sabbath. He prescribed the duty, and specified what particular portion of time should be allotted to the performance of it. No sooner was the work of creation finished, than he "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."* He enjoined it as a law, that one day in seven should be set apart from all other occupations, and should be consecrated in a peculiar manner to his service. And on whom did he enjoin this law? On man. "The Sabbath was made for man." Not for a single individual: not for one generation: not for one particular family or nation: but for man, for the whole human race. Hence, in after times, when it pleased the Almighty to vouchsafe a written revelation of his moral law, the law of the Sabbath was incorporated into it. The commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, though essentially differing from the other precepts of the decalogue, yet because of its universal and immutable obligation on all (the) intelligent (creatures of this lower world,) formed a part of that law which was written on two tables of stone by the finger of God himself.

Such is the statement in the text respecting the nature of the Sabbath. Let us next inquire into the end of this institution. What was the object which the Almighty had in view, when he appointed this day of holy rest? Did he bless the seventh day, and sanctify it; and then create mankind to keep this instituted Sabbath? No. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." God first created man, and then *for* man appointed the Sabbath; for his advantage, for his happiness. The commandment to observe the Sabbath day, like every other precept of the divine law, is not only just and holy, but also good; beneficial in its consequences to those who keep it; "for their good always."

Man, created in the image of his Maker, had no conception of happiness in which his Maker was not associated. God was in all his thoughts; the object of all his affections; the center of all his desires. The holy law was written in the tables of his heart. Obedience to that holy law, contemplation of the divine perfections, the spiritual exercises of prayer and praises, formed the very joy of his heart. To man thus constituted, what a glorious privilege was the

* Genesis, ii. 2.

appointment of the Sabbath ! While occupied during the six days in dressing the garden in which God had placed him, under a sense of the divine presence, love, and favor, he would experience uninterrupted felicity. Communion with his Maker would sweeten and sanctify all his occupations. Every day would be a day of happiness. But the Sabbath would be his supreme delight. On that blessed day his soul would "return unto its rest." On that day, above all days, disengaged from every other employment, he would rejoice in the Lord "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." With what transport would he welcome the recurring season, what thankfulness would he feel for the institution of a season, in which his heart, released from the performance of other duties, might give full vent to its liveliest emotions ; might bestow an undivided attention on the worship of his God ; and pour itself forth without cessation in admiring gratitude and adoring love ! Thus, in the original state of innocence, "the Sabbath was made for man." Had he never fallen by iniquity, the appointment of a day of holy rest would have proved a continual source of renewed gratification and augmented joy.

But it is to man in his present state, under the curse and consequences of sin, that the beneficial effects of this appointment are more conspicuously to be seen. In respect to his temporal concerns, man has reason to bless the divine goodness for the seasonable recurrence of a day of rest. Doomed as are the greater part of mankind "in the sweat of their face to eat bread ;" engaged in constant and laborious occupations, which oftentimes necessarily preclude the exercise of social affections, and the endearing intercourse of domestic life, the returning Sabbath brings with it advantages and pleasures peculiarly its own. By the interruption thus imposed on the active employments of life, the weary body is refreshed, the exhausted spirits are recruited, the tender sympathies of nature are indulged and strengthened. Man, restored on every seventh day to the peaceful bosom of his family, experiences a tranquillity and delight, to which had it not been for the opportunity thus vouchsafed to him, he would, for the most part have remained a stranger.

It is, however, with respect to his spiritual concerns, that it may be more emphatically said, "the Sabbath was made for man." In comparison with the benefits which this ap-

pointment provides in a religious point of view, all its advantages, of a temporal nature, are not worthy to be named. What is the condition of man on earth? Stationed in this lower world, he can look forward but to some few years for his continuance in it. But on his employment of these few years, consequences of infinite moment are suspended. Before him lies eternity; a state of eternal happiness, or of eternal woe. By nature and by practice a sinner, he hath incurred the wrath of God, and the pains of hell. But a way of escape is yet disclosed: a way, in which his peace with God may yet be made, and his soul be fitted for heavenly glory. The present life is the time allotted for accomplishing these important ends. If he neglect to improve this opportunity, he must perish for ever. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." There is "no repentance in the grave." After death cometh the judgment. The soul, weighed down with the load of unpardoned sin, unrenewed to holiness, and at enmity with God, must go of course "to its own place;" to the only place that is fitted to receive it, the place reserved for the devil and his angels.

Preparation then for eternity is manifestly the first, the great concern of life. Placed by the side of the salvation of the soul every other object sinks into insignificance. Such, however, is man's natural blindness and perversion, that there is no one object which he is so greatly inclined to overlook. Every trifling worldly pursuit engages, engrosses his attention; while the glories of heaven and the torments of hell are disregarded and forgotten. What then is the end of the Sabbath, but to counteract this evil? What is the direct tendency of this institution, but to rouse man to a consideration of those important matters which he is so disposed to neglect; to furnish him with leisure for prosecuting his highest interests? Why is he commanded to keep holy one day in seven, but that, being disengaged from every inferior concern, he may encounter no interruption in attending to the "one thing needful," in furthering the salvation of his soul, in cultivating religious feelings and affections? In this view of the subject, the Sabbath was indeed "made for man." No appointment could be devised more adapted to his case, more calculated to promote his felicity. If a stated day of holy rest had not been inas-

tated by divine authority ; it would have been his interest, his wisdom, to have made such an institution for himself.

But further, it is not in rousing mankind to the care of their souls, or in providing them with leisure for prosecuting this important concern, that the spiritual advantages of the Sabbath exclusively consist. The observance of this holy institution is one of those appointed means of grace, the diligent use of which God has promised in an especial manner to bless. "Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it."* The soul of man, even when brought by divine grace to make choice of the ways of God, stands in need of continual supplies of grace to enable it to walk in those ways. Innumerable obstacles, both from within and without, oppose its progress, and call forth the daily exercises of watchfulness and prayer. The Christian, too often baffled in his spiritual conflict, feels his weakness, and earnestly longs to have his strength renewed. Thus circumstanced, the regular recurrence of a period, in which not only the impediment, that an ensnaring intercourse with the world places in his road, is for a season suspended, but provision also is made for recruiting his exhausted vigor, for imparting to him augmented courage and ability for the contest, must prove to him an institution of incalculable benefit. Such an institution is the Sabbath. Such has it proved to thousands in every age. Weary and heavy laden, they have found this day a day of rest unto their souls. From their experience of its reviving and salutary influence on their spiritual concerns, they have hailed its return with delight. "Hungry and thirsty, their soul has fainted in them." But in the sacred occupations and ordinances of the Sabbath, they have found refreshment ; they have been "satisfied as with marrow and fatness : and with joy have they drunk water out of these wells of salvation."

H. From this statement of the Nature and the End of the Sabbath I shall deduce some inferences, which respect both the Obligations to observe this Holy Day, and the Manner of observing it. The Nature of the Sabbath imposes on us very constraining obligations to the observance of it. It is a divine institution. He who made us made

* Isaiah, lvi. 2.

the Sabbath also, and has enjoined us to observe it. He has commanded us to remember that we keep holy the Sabbath day. Is the command of our Maker binding on us? In requiring us to separate one day in seven to his immediate service, has he required of us more than he had a right to require? God is the great proprietor of all. Whatever we are or have proceeds from him. He made us out of nothing. He "giveth us life and breath and all things. In Him we live and move and have our being." The ground on which we tread, the food by which we are supported, the very air which we inhale, is his. Thus daily dependent on his bounty, we cannot justly refuse to devote a portion of our time to Him, to whom the whole is due. We cannot with any shadow of excuse withhold from Him that portion of our time, which he specifically requires from us.

But the *End* for which the Sabbath was instituted imposes additional, and, if it be possible, even more urgent obligations to the observance of it. It is a beneficial institution. It was appointed with the merciful design of furthering our eternal salvation, of strengthening and refreshing our weary soul in its pilgrimage through this wilderness of misery and sin. Can the Sabbath then with safety be neglected? Our best, our highest interests imperiously forbid us to neglect it. The reasoning which Moses addresses to the Israelites may with an especial reference to the Sabbath be forcibly addressed to us. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul; to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" It is *for our good*, that God hath instituted the Sabbath. It is *for our good* that He requires us to keep it holy. What can be more reasonable than obedience to the command? Had man been made for the Sabbath; had we been created for the express purpose of keeping holy the seventh day; disobedience to the divine command could not have been vindicated on any plea. However attempted to be palliated, such disobedience would have been direct rebellion against our glorious Maker. But now, "since the Sabbath was made for man;" since our felicity is the object of this

holy institution ; the abuse and profanation of it constitute a crime of a far deeper dye. Disobedience to the law of the Sabbath is black ingratitude against our gracious Benefactor. And what must be the consequences of such disobedience ? Disregarding the sacred duties of the day, " we forsake our own mercies." Omitting to improve the opportunity vouchsafed to us for working out our salvation, we must inevitably perish. But let us remember, that to perish through the neglect and profanation of that holy season, which was especially set a part by God for promoting the salvation of our souls, will be to perish under circumstances of peculiar guilt. Such an abuse of mercy will shew indeed, that we *hate to be reformed*. The Lord adduces it as a great aggravation of Israel's sin : " I gave them my Sabbaths."* Surely he will adduce the gift of the Sabbath as a great aggravation of our sin, if, notwithstanding this beneficial appointment we neglect our souls, and perish in our sins. There is an awful declaration recorded in the word of truth, " Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Every privilege bestowed on us increases our responsibility. Every privilege bestowed on us in vain, increases our condemnation. My brethren, whatever may be your present sentiments on this matter, know most assuredly, that, as the use and improvement which you shall have made of the Sabbath, that important talent committed to your trust, will form one solemn subject of inquiry on the day when you shall render an account of your stewardship before the judgment-seat of Christ ; so the habitual neglect ~~and profanation~~ of this merciful institution will inflict on the consciences of all those who shall have habitually neglected ~~and profaned~~ it, a wound, for which eternity will find no cure.

What then are the duties of this Holy Day ? What is the manner in which we are required to observe the Sabbath ? This is a point, which it is of the utmost moment to ascertain and specify ; a point, however, on which many questions frequently arise, many opinions are advanced. The cause indeed of such diversity of sentiment among mankind is clear. It plainly results from their entertaining partial and contracted views of the nature of the Sabbath. from their not adverting with sufficient accuracy to the Design

* Ezekiel, xx. 12.

and end of the institution. Attention to this circumstance would obviate much misconception, would clear up many doubts, would detect the fallacy of much ingenious sophistry. It must be obvious, that properly to observe the day of rest, is to observe it in such a manner as best accords with the purposes for which the day of rest is especially set apart. The command to keep holy the Sabbath evidently implies, that we dedicate that portion of our time to the performance of such duties as are most congenial with the leading object, which the Sabbath was designed to promote. That object, we have seen, is the salvation of the soul. To this End God made the Sabbath. To this end he hath given us his Sabbaths. Here then we have a plain and simple rule, by which we may interpret the spirit and import of the precept, "Keep holy the Sabbath day." Whatever occupations or employments contribute to further the salvation of the soul, are enjoined to be practised on this solemn day. Whatever occupations or employments tend to impede, or to counteract this great design, with the exception of works of mercy and works of actual necessity, are forbidden to be practised.

Hence, on this principle, all manner of work is strictly prohibited to be done. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Nor let us limit the extent of the prohibition. Let us not suppose that works of labor only, mechanical and agricultural employments, are exclusively contained in it. Every occupation of a temporal and worldly nature is alike forbidden; because every occupation of a temporal and worldly nature is alike inconsistent with the end of this holy institution, the advancement of our spiritual concerns. Does the tradesman devote the quiet interval of the Sabbath to the business of posting his books, of balancing his accounts, of writing letters to his correspondents? Does the merchant employ this solemn season in planning schemes of commercial speculation, in calculating future profits, in devising new sources of wealth and credit? Does the statesman convert this day of holy rest into a day of political engagements and intrigue? Does the professional man take advantage of the leisure which this day affords from more public avocations, to apply himself in private to his professional studies, to acquire information on topics connected with his worldly calling? Does the man of sci-

ence, or of letters, consume the sacred hours of Sunday in scientific or in literary pursuits? Not one of the persons thus occupied, is occupied in a manner answerable to the design for which the Sabbath was appointed. In the sight of Him who seeth in secret, who searcheth and judgeth the heart, they are justly chargeable with the crime of despising his gifts, of neglecting their souls, of wasting, on objects of comparative worthlessness and insignificance, that precious opportunity which in mercy he had vouchsafed for them, for much higher, and far more interesting concerns.

On the same principle, worldly pleasure is equally to be esteemed a violation of the Sabbath. Such amusements as the world provides, are not adapted to the purpose of the day. Is the salvation of the soul promoted by the gratification of fleshly lusts, of carnal sloth, of pride, and vanity? Can the man who has spent the Sunday in sensual enjoyments, in trifling mirth, in frivolous company, in vain, unprofitable discourse, can he retire at night within his chamber, and say with an approving conscience, 'I have passed this day of holy rest in a manner agreeable to the design of Him who instituted it: I have passed it in endeavoring to improve my immortal soul; in striving to make my peace with God, to fortify my heart against the assaults of Satan, and the temptations of the world, to render myself more fit for heavenly glory?' My brethren, he has slighted and perverted the gift of God. He has greatly added to all his former guilt by this profane abuse of God's holy institution. He has made that day, which was specifically appointed to assist him in subduing his lusts, an occasion of indulging them, of increasing their power over his soul.

But perhaps you are ready to object, that I paint the subject in gloomy colors. 'According to this representation, the Sabbath is converted into a season of penance and mortification. Where is that face of cheerfulness and hilarity, which Sunday should assume? We thought it had been a day of enjoyment and delight.' And such it is: a day of great delight, of the most pure enjoyment. "To go up unto the house of the Lord, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that keep holy day: to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple:" to pour out the heart before God in penitent confessions and earnest prayer; to "search the Scriptures," which are

“able to save the soul :” to meditate on the love of Christ, “which passeth knowledge :” to join in edifying and improving conversation, which “may minister grace unto the hearers : to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction :” to instruct the ignorant ; to strengthen the weak ; to relieve the indigent ; these, these are the pure enjoyments which the Sabbath furnishes. In these spiritual exercises, in these holy occupations, in this “labor of love,” the servant of God experiences a pleasure, in comparison with which all the pleasures of the world are dross and vanity. He finds the truth of the promise. “Calling the Sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord, and honorable, not doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasure, nor speaking his own words, he delights himself in the Lord.”* One day thus spent is to him better than a thousand consumed in ungodliness and sin. “He is glad when they say unto him, let us go unto the house of the Lord.” Object not then, that we paint the Sabbath in gloomy colors. Object not, that we strip it of all its inviting charms : that we exhibit it under a joyless and forbidding aspect. Rather confess the real truth, that you have no taste for its spiritual delights. Confess that you entertain no notions of enjoyment unconnected with sensual gratification : that your ideas of a religious festival coincide with those of the idolaters of old, who “sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.”† Confess that a Sabbath passed in holy exercises, in communion with God, in contemplation of his excellencies, in the study of his word, in acts of piety, mercy, and charity ; confess that the Sabbath thus passed would be *weariness* to you, a task painful and irksome to the feelings of your heart. And now tremble at the confession which you have inadvertently made. Tremble to reflect, that by your own acknowledgment you are, unprepared for death, unfit for heaven, unable to participate its happiness. If the observance of a short Sabbath here be a work so painful and offensive, what will an eternal Sabbath prove ? If you cannot bear to pass one day in seven in the worship and service of your Maker, how will you endure an eternity employed in “seeing God and serving him ?” With a soul thus alienated from the life of God, would not heaven itself

* Isaiah, lviil. 13, 14. † 1 Cor. x. 7.

be to you a place of anguish? Would not the sight of so many millions of blessed creatures, blessed in the participation of delights, in which you could find no pleasure, distract you with envy, disappointment, rage, and grief, with every hateful and tormenting passion? Tremble, my brethren, at your awful state. Tremble at the dreadful precipice on which you tetter. Regard your aversion to the Sabbath, your distaste for its spiritual enjoyments, as an undeniable proof of a truth, which perhaps you are unwilling to admit, the natural enmity of your heart to God. Seek then of Him that new heart, which he has promised to those who seek it. Pray to him to "circumcise your heart that you may love the Lord your God;"* that you may find delight in his ordinances now; and, by the pleasure which you experience in keeping his Sabbaths on earth, may evidence your meetness for entering into that heavenly and eternal "rest, which remaineth for the people of God."

But it is not to those only who altogether neglect or pervert the institution of the Sabbath, that the view which has been taken of the subject may be followed with beneficial effects. There are others to whom the discussion may prove, if not in an equal, yet in a high degree profitable. Many persons who appear to be actuated by a sincere intention of keeping holy the Sabbath day, yet, from not duly attending to the Design of the institution, greatly err in the manner of observing it. Not considering that their spiritual improvement is the great End for which the Sabbath was appointed, and so far only as this End is promoted, the day is properly observed by *them*, they deem it sufficient to be occupied in a constant succession of religious exercises, without adverting to the practical influence of these exercises on their own hearts. They perform the sacred duties of the day, as if man was made for the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath for man: as if the discharge of those sacred duties, which were prescribed only as means of grace, constituted in fact the end for which the institution was established. From the same cause another evil of considerable magnitude results. An undue attention is paid to some duties before others. The objects, for the attainment of which only they were enjoined, not being kept in view, the relative importance of each, and also the necessity of assigning to each its proper

* Deut. xxx. 6.

place, and a proportionate regard, are overlooked. Hence one duty is immoderately preferred and practiced to the neglect, and even to the exclusion, of another. Attendance on public ordinances is suffered to engross so large a portion of the day as not to allow time for private prayer, for self-examination, for the study of the word of God: or these duties of the closet, it may be, are protracted to such an unseasonable length, that the no less important duties of family prayer, and of family instruction, are hastily performed, or altogether omitted. These evils, a more intimate acquaintance with the real Design of the Sabbath would tend to correct. It would teach the persons in question, that the true criterion of having kept holy the Sabbath day consists, not in the number of hours devoted to reading at home, or to hearing sermons at church, but in the actual proficiency which has been made in holiness, in the mortification of sin, and in the attainment of Christian tempers, and of heavenly dispositions. It would shew that an exact distribution of time among the several duties enjoined, according to their respective claims, and to the opportunities vouchsafed, is essential to the proper observance of the Sabbath; and that the discharge of one duty cannot be permitted to encroach on that of another without a proportionable intrusion on the good order of the day. The leading inquiries by which a person, who strictly regards the End of the Sabbath, will examine himself, are these. ‘ While I have spent the day in a series of religious exercises, have I performed them not merely as formal services, as empty acts of obedience, but as means which I have been commanded to use for the strengthening and confirming of my soul in the ways of godliness? Have I sought to become more holy, more humble, more spiritual, by all the duties in which I have been engaged? Have I endeavored to profit by the sermons to which I have listened; to grow not only in knowledge, but in grace? And is it my sincere desire, that, in the future tenor of my life, my profiting may appear unto all men? Have I duly respected the *different* duties of the day? Have I so regulated my performance of them, that each has received its appropriate share of time and attention? Have I remembered that my children and my servants have eternal interests at stake? that the Sabbath was made for them as well as for myself? Have I then

made provision that they should equally partake with myself the advantages of the Sabbath? Have I instructed them at home? Have I afforded them leisure for joining in the public worship of God? Have I exerted my authority in inducing them to improve the opportunities thus placed in their power? In a word, has it been my object to make this season of holy rest subservient to the most important interest of myself and of all within the circle of my influence?"

My brethren, propose these questions to your own hearts, and see how far you can satisfactorily reply to them. See whether you have hitherto kept the Sabbath in a manner suitable to the end for which it was appointed. Be ashamed for past neglect. Henceforth, by renewed exertions, by increased circumspection, redeem the time. And may God give you grace so to observe this blessed institution, that it may be a source of augmented consolation and delight on earth, and a theme of eternal gratitude and praise in heaven?

SERMON XXXVII.

On the Danger and Misery of Self Deception.

MATTHEW, xix. 16.

And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal Life?

OF the numerous persons who applied to our Lord, during his ministry on earth, few addressed him on the concerns of their souls. Some worldly good, some temporal blessing, the removal of a bodily disorder, or the recovery of a diseased or dying relative constituted the usual subjects of their application. "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.—Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.—Sir, come down ere my child die." Such were the requests which most frequently assailed the ears of Jesus. Some examples, however, of a

different conduct occur. We have an instance in the petitioner in the text. "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" It is spiritual instruction which he seeks. It is an heavenly, not an earthly good, concerning which he desires information and advice. It is the attainment of eternal life to which his inquiry is directed.

The interesting conference, of which this inquiry is the commencement, in an especial manner lays claim to our notice, by exhibiting a memorable instance of the most dangerous Self-Deception, and of the admirable wisdom with which our Lord proceeded to detect the disorder, and to apply the remedy.

"And behold, one came and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus saith, Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus saith unto him; If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."

In endeavoring to make a profitable use of this instructive portion of Scripture, I shall propose to your consideration,

I. The state and character of the person who here addressed our Lord.

II. The conduct of our Lord on this occasion.

I. On comparing the several accounts of this transaction, we discover many circumstances which are calculated at first sight to impress us with very favorable sentiments of the state and character of the person here introduced to our notice. He was a young man, it is probable of an appearance more than usually prepossessing, of engaging manners, and of amiable disposition. His moral conduct, it may also be inferred, was decent and exemplary. At that season of life, in which youth is too often alleged as a palliation at least of

vicious indulgence, he had been free from the practice of licentious irregularities. Even the additional temptation which riches, by facilitating the means of sensual gratification, administer, had not induced him to swerve from the strict line of virtue and temperance. His whole deportment, we may conjecture, had been distinguished by a propriety and a moderation, which, under similar circumstances of youth and affluence, are rarely to be found.

To these commendable traits in his character, another feature of superior excellence may be subjoined. He professed a serious regard for religion. He was not infected with the Sadducean principles of the times. He believed in a future state. The question which he proposed in the text intimates an anxiety for his spiritual concerns; while the earnest and respectful manner in which he preferred his petition (for "he came running, and kneeled to Jesus,"*) evinces the honorable opinion which he entertained of our Lord, as a teacher sent from God.

So far then as the character under review has been examined, it exhibits a pleasing combination of many attractive and interesting qualities. But hitherto we have surveyed the surface only. What is the state within? Does "the hidden man of the heart" correspond with this graceful and promising exterior? We are compelled to assert the contrary. We are compelled to assert, that, notwithstanding these hopeful appearances, the young man is still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Amiable, moral, engaging, seemingly desirous of religious instruction, professedly anxious about the concerns of his soul, he has at present "neither part nor lot" in the kingdom of heaven; "for his heart is not right in the sight of God."

If this language should excite our astonishment, let us attend to the particulars of this memorable conference. They will fully elucidate and confirm the assertion. They will plainly shew, that the person whose character is the subject of investigation, is immersed in a state of the most awful Self-Deception: that, cherishing favorable opinions of his own religious attainments, he is destitute of those views and convictions, which, in a fallen creature, constitute the very foundation of religion: and that, while he professes to be influenced by a predominant love for heavenly and eternal

* Mark, x. 17,

treasures, he in fact retains an immoderate attachment to the things of the present life.

The first enquiry which he makes, discovers how inadequate, to say the least, are his conceptions of that important truth, the corruption of his heart. "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" If the question, by expressing his desire of being taught the way of God more perfectly, implies a confession of his ignorance, and of his readiness to receive instruction, it also betrays a proud confidence, an avowed reliance on his own sufficiency and strength. 'Let the *good thing*, by which eternal life may be procured, be pointed out, and I will do it.' The person, whose heart was duly impressed with a conviction of his natural weakness and depravity, could not employ such language. Were he assured that the performance of any one *good thing* was necessary for the attainment of eternal life, he would for ever despair of attaining it. What is that *good thing*, which even if it were pointed out, the young man can undertake to perform? Does he know that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing: that even if to will be present with him, how to perform that which is good he cannot find? Does he know that his "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" Does he know that the Holy Ghost is the author and giver of all goodness: that whatever good thing may be found in man, is the effect, not of innate propensities, but of renewing grace? Does he know, that if he would enter into the kingdom of God, he must be born again of the Spirit? No. These are truths of which he has no knowledge, no abiding, practical conviction. Confiding on the strength and integrity of his own heart, he fears no danger, suspects no evil: and in a presumptuous opposition to those very Scriptures which he professes to believe, talks of the goodness of human nature, and denominates every man *good* whose life is not stained by profane or immoral practices.

With such ignorance of his natural depravity, what are the views which he entertains of his own personal guilt? Is he convinced of sin? Does he feel and lament his numerous transgressions of the divine law? Is he humbled in the dust? Does he cry for mercy? Advert to the next particulars of this interesting conference. When directed to keep the commandments, he instantly inquires, *Which?* No

inquiry can more clearly expose his ignorance of the nature and extent of his duty. Moses has already declared, that, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things, which are written in the book of the law to do them."* Where such ignorance, with respect to the measure of the required obedience, prevails, no adequate sense of guilt, no suitable humiliation for sin can possibly exist. But the impenitence betrayed by this inquiry falls greatly short of the presumption discovered in the next reply. "Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder : Thou shalt not commit adultery ; Thou shalt not steal ; thou shalt not bear false witness ; Honor thy father and thy mother ; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up ; what lack I yet ?" Has he indeed kept all these things from his youth up ? If, in his outward conduct, he has complied with the letter of the divine commandments, has he also fulfilled their heart-searching and spiritual injunctions ? Has he never, in one single instance, injured others in their persons, in their property, or in their reputation ? Has he never, in one single moment, indulged an impure, a covetous, or a malignant thought ? Has he at all times uniformly loved his neighbor as himself ? Nay, admit it to be possible that he can even satisfactorily answer these enquiries ; admit it to be possible that, as he arrogantly boasts, he has really kept all these things from his youth up : can he be so ignorant of the divine law as seriously to inquire, whether any thing yet be wanting to complete the perfection of his character ? What is the first and great commandment ? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Not even a sinless obedience to one precept of the law can excuse the neglect or violation of another. Not the most exemplary discharge of relative and social duties can supersede the necessity of loving God with all the heart. Directly contrary, however, is the conclusion which the young man's language tends to introduce. 'Having fully performed my duty to my neighbor, what lack I yet ?' Alas ! one thing thou lackest, such an humbling view of thine own unworthiness and guilt, as shall lead thee to exclaim with holy Job, "Behold, I am vile ; what shall I answer thee ? I

* Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26.

will lay my hand upon my mouth." "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

Nor is the young man better acquainted with the secret bias of his affections than with his depravity and guilt. Eternal life is not the single object of which, as he thinks, he feels the full importance. In the attainment of this object, he believes, that there is no good thing, which he is not prepared to do; no difficulty, with which he will not readily contend; no loss to which he will not cheerfully submit. But the termination of the conference shews, that in this particular also he is a stranger to his real state: that pre-eminent as he deems his desire after heavenly and eternal treasures, the riches of the present world lie much nearer to his heart. Must he sell all that he hath, and give it to the poor? Must he relinquish his large possessions with their attendant comforts? Must he encounter poverty with its untried hardships? Must he take up his cross and follow Christ, and join the number of his despised disciples? Is this the price at which he must purchase heaven? For such a demand he is wholly unprepared—'Can such a demand be reasonable? Can so immense a sacrifice be requisite? What necessary connection can exist between renouncing the blessings of this life, and securing an inheritance in that which is to come? May not the treasures of both worlds be successively enjoyed? May not a rich man enter into the kingdom of God? If so narrow and difficult be the way to life, who then can be saved? Can the person, who inculcates such harsh and unpalatable doctrines; who, instead of bestowing commendation and encouragement, where so many commendable qualities are found, insists only on the necessity of the most unreasonable sacrifices: can this person be a teacher sent from God? Can the Almighty have invested with a divine commission one, who calls upon mankind to slight the gifts of Providence, and by a voluntary rejection of the means conferred upon them, to diminish their opportunities, and to contract their sphere of usefulness?'—Such are the reflections which in rapid succession occupy the young man's mind. What is the result? "He goes away sorrowful; for he has large possessions." The secret, unsuspected attachment to earthly things prevails. Grieved, disappointed, mortified, he terminates a conference, which, instead of grat-

* Job, xl. 4. xlii. 6.

ifying his expectations, by flattering his self-complacency and pride, only tends in its consequences to lower his pretensions, and to represent him as far removed from the kingdom of heaven.

Such are the state and character of the person who here addresses our Lord.

H. I propose to your consideration the conduct of our Lord on this occasion.

It is said by St. Mark, in his account of this transaction, that "Jesus beholding the young man, loved him." We are not to collect from this expression, either that Jesus was ignorant of the young man's real character, or that knowing it, he regarded him with approbation. As God, "he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man."* As God, he could not but disapprove of a proud, self-justifying, worldly spirit, wherever it might be found. But the expression is to be understood in reference to the human nature of Christ. As man, he could not contemplate so many pleasing and amiable qualities without feeling an involuntary affection for the object, who possessed them : an affection however, mingled with sentiments of the tenderest compassion, from a consideration of the miserable state of Self-Deception into which he was plunged, and of the imminent danger to which his soul, notwithstanding all his apparent anxiety for its safety, was exposed.

Under the influence of these sentiments, what is the conduct of our Lord ? He does not promote the Self-Deception, and thus contribute to augment the danger. He does not cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." He does not compliment the young man on his moral attainments, on his religious professions ; and thus help to confirm the favorable opinion, which he already cherishes of his own state and character. Like a true friend, and an experienced physician, who has the real interest of his patient at heart ; who knows that palliatives will only increase the disorder, and that nothing less than a deep and entire renovation can effect a permanent cure ; our Lord proceeds with consummate skill to probe the wound, and to detect the secret poison, which lurks beneath this promising appearance of health and soundness. An attention to the

* John, ii. 24, 25.

several steps, by which he endeavors to draw aside the veil of Self-Deceit, will excite our admiration of the wisdom and tenderness displayed on this occasion.

The young man accosted our Lord with the title of "Good master." Jesus saith, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." We are not to interpret this reply, as if our Lord intends to intimate, that the title of *good* when addressed to himself, is improperly applied. On the contrary, the very reasoning which he adopts, proves the peculiar propriety of such an application: for He is God; and to him therefore, by his own limitation, the title of *Good* pre-eminently belongs. But in this passage he speaks of himself not according to his real character and essential dignity, but in reference to the inferior apprehensions entertained of him by the person with whom he is discoursing. Of the mysterious excellence of Christ as "God manifest in the flesh,"* the young man has no conceptions. The highest character which he ascribes to Jesus, is that of a human teacher invested with a divine commission. With these sentiments he approached our Lord. What then is the meaning of our Lord's reply? 'Approaching me with such sentiments, why callest thou me good? A fellow mortal as you deem me, with yourself, have I any pretensions to this title?' The tendency of the words thus explained is obvious. Let them silently operate as a corrective to the pride and self-sufficiency of the person to whom they are directed. The young man thinks himself good. He has been accustomed to call himself good. Can he any longer assume a title, which even a teacher sent from God disclaims? But our Lord has still a further object in view. He wishes to shew, that the terms *good* and *goodness*, in the sense which his new disciple assigns to them, are under every circumstance totally inapplicable to man. "There is none good but one, that is God." 'God only is inherently and essentially good. Therefore to God only is the title of good appropriate. On a created being of the highest order it would be improperly conferred. With what propriety then can it be conferred on any of the sons of men, "the thoughts of whose hearts are only evil continually?" Let this reflection be suitably improved. Henceforth ascribe not to man that title which belongs to God

* 1 Timothy, iii. 16.

only. Henceforth ascribe not to man that title to which he possesses no pretensions. Learn to think and to speak of your own heart in a manner more accordant with its real state; more consistent with those representations which the Scriptures and experience exhibit of its inherent and universal depravity.*

But there is another point to be assailed. The young man is as insensible of his guilt, as he is blind to his corruption. Observe the masterly and judicious mode in which the assault is made. To his inquiry, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus replies, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." By this reply he neither insinuates the possibility of purchasing heaven by obedience, nor seriously advises the persisting in such an attempt. To develop his meaning, we must again consider him as regulating his answer in accommodation to the views and character of the person who had proposed the question. Had the young man, with unfeigned humility, and under a real apprehension of his misery and danger as a sinner, inquired the way of salvation; doubtless our Lord in the plainest terms would have discouraged every idea of seeking salvation by works: doubtless he would have said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."* But the present occasion requires from him a different conduct. His object is to humble, to convict, to alarm. He therefore meets the young man on his own grounds. 'By your own good works you purpose to enter into life. If this be your design, the road is plain. "Keep the commandments—Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them."† Do thou those things, and thou shalt live by them.' Mark the wisdom and suitableness of this direction. The young man's pride and self-sufficiency results from his ignorance of the moral law. To the moral law he is now directed to look. In the extensive and spiritual demands of that law let him discern the extent and spirituality of the required obedience. Compared with these extensive and spiritual demands, let him discern the scantiness and imperfection of that obedience which he has already paid, and is so inclined

* John, xiv. 6. † Rom. x. 5.

to magnify. Let a discovery of those innumerable defects, which this standard faithfully applied cannot fail of disclosing, repress his self-justifying spirit ; awaken him to an humbling sense of his guilt ; and teach him the necessity of some more availing righteousness, than his own superficial compliance with the letter of some of the precepts of the law. Do we ask on what account our Lord selects for examination the commandments of the second table in preference to those of the first ? Let this particular also be resolved into the peculiarities of the case. It is on the performance of social duties that the young man founds the fancied perfection of his character. Jesus therefore purposely sets before him that portion of the decalogue which comprehends the law of love to his neighbor : that even in those very duties in which he considers his obedience to be complete, his deficiency may fully appear ; and thus the sandy foundation of his imagined righteousness be more strikingly exposed.

To these gentle and indirect assaults, an attack of a more decisive tendency succeeds. Jesus saith unto the young man, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come and follow me." By this admonitory mandate he means not to intimate that perfection is a point ever attainable by man : that the relinquishment of worldly possessions is at all times essential to the characters of his disciples : that the most extensive, self-denying beneficence will pay any part of the price of heaven. Far were such intimations from our Lord's meaning. Advert once more to the peculiar circumstances of the case. The young man had testified an high respect for Jesus, and a full confidence in his instructions. He had professed a pre-eminent regard for his own soul. He had declared his readiness to perform any additional act of obedience which might be requisite to secure the possession of eternal life. Is he sincere in these professions ? Bring them to the test. 'To complete the perfection of thy character, one thing is wanting. To ensure an admission into heaven, one act of obedience still remains to be performed. Renounce thy wealth ; embrace a life of poverty and persecution ; and thus exchange thy perishable riches for an enduring treasure, for an unfading crown of endless glory.' Does the mandate prove unacceptable ? Does he hesitate ? Does he

draw back ? Does he refuse compliance ? Let the trial detect his Self-Deceit. Let it disclose to him the hidden insincerity of his professions. Let it discover to him that worldly spirit, which secretly predominates within, and, with all his imaginary aspirations after heavenly objects, insensibly rivets his soul to earth.

Such was the conduct of our Lord on this memorable occasion : a conduct evidently dictated by a compassionate regard to the person on whose account it took place ; admirably suited to the peculiar circumstances of his state ; and eminently calculated to prove in the highest degree beneficial to his most important interest. So far indeed as the event is known to us, the success of this attempt was not equal either to the love which prompted it, or to the wisdom with which it was executed. The young man terminates the conference. But he terminates it in a far more hopeful condition than he had commenced it. He goes away *sorrowful*. His presumptuous expectations have encountered a check. His favorable sentiments of his own goodness and pretensions are probably shaken. At least his thoughts on these subjects have received a new direction, which, if pursued, may eventually lead him to conclusions very different from those at which he has hitherto arrived. Of one truth he certainly may have acquired the knowledge ; that he is not that perfect character which he has fondly conceived himself to be. Whether the good seeds thus happily sown, in process of time, may bring forth their proper fruit, we cannot venture to pronounce. We may hope that the lessons imparted to him may become, through the divine blessing, instrumental to his eternal salvation ; and that, abandoning the arrogant attempt of establishing his own righteousness, he may at last “ submit himself to the righteousness of God.” But speculations of this nature are more curious than improving. Let us more profitably employ the instructive incident to which our attention has been turned, by deducing from it some obvious and edifying reflections.

1. Let us hence take occasion to reflect on the misery of a state of Self-Deception. If the character which we have contemplated cannot engage our approbation, at least it must excite our pity. To behold a man wretchedly deluded on a point of infinite importance : to behold him sleeping with

presumptuous security on the brink of everlasting destruction : what an affecting sight ! Justly entitled to our compassion would be the condition of a person, who, afflicted with an incurable disorder, which must speedily terminate in death, should talk of years to come, of plans of future happiness ; and, unconscious of the fatal malady which secretly preyed upon his vitals, should fondly cherish expectations which never can be realized. How much stronger claims then to our commiseration does *he* possess, who is deceived as to the state of his soul ; who, being spiritually dead, flatters himself that he is alive : who, blinded by the specious luster of a promising exterior, discovers not the corruption and deformity which lurk within ! Does death arrest him in his course ? How terrible the consequences ! To perish with a lie in his right hand ; to fall at once from the pinnacle of hope into the abyss of torment and despair ; to awake out of his delusive dreams, and find himself irrecoverably plunged into that lake of fire which never will be quenched ; what heart can conceive the disappointment, the anguish, the horror of such a state !

But is the character under view a character rarely to be found ? Is the young man of whom we have been discoursing a solitary instance of Self-Deceit ? Alas ! it is to be feared, that there are numbers who resemble him : who, “ thinking themselves to be something when they are nothing, deceive themselves : ” * numbers, who, like him, unacquainted with their natural depravity, boast of the goodness of their hearts, and pride themselves on their pleasing tempers and amiable dispositions : numbers, who, like him, limiting their duty to the precepts of the second table, and restricting even these to their literal interpretation, are ready to exclaim, “ All these things have I kept from my youth up : what lack I yet ? ” What is actually the language of thousands ? “ I have done no harm. I am not a murderer, a thief, or an adulterer. I injure no man. I pay to all their due. I am kind to my neighbors ; affectionate to my relations, faithful to my friends. May I not without dismay look forward to death and judgment ? ” The consciences of many must testify that this is no feigned description. The consciences of many must testify, that such has been their language, the language at least of their hearts,

* Gal. vi. 3.

But, my brethren, if such be the language of our hearts, in what respect do we differ from this self-deceived young man? If, like him, we say that we have no sin, do we not also like him deceive ourselves? We can discern his danger. Can we not discern our own? We can pity his state. Have we no pity for our own? Israel said, "Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me." What saith the Lord? "Behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest I have not sinned." Sinner, "how canst thou say, I am not polluted? See thy way—know what thou hast done." Does not God search the heart? Canst thou hide thy sins from him? "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God." Be no longer deceived. Pray that your eyes may be opened. Seek to discover the depth of your iniquity. Bring your heart and life to the standard of God's word: till convicted, humbled, abased, you smite upon your breast, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

2. Let us take occasion from the subject before us to reflect, that in stripping away the specious covering, which Self-Deceit imposes, and in disclosing the sinner to himself, consists one important part of the duty of a minister. Such was the conduct of our Lord. Such will be the conduct of every faithful preacher of his word. Let others prophesy "smooth things;" let them "heal the hurt of the people slightly;" let them lull mankind into a false security, and buoy them up with a fallacious hope. But the pastor, who anxiously desires the eternal welfare of his flock; who would improve the talent committed to his keeping, and would deliver his own soul, cannot thus betray his trust. He cannot gratify his hearers by telling them that, 'All is well,' while he has reason to suspect, that at the bottom they are building on a false foundation. He cannot flatter them with the delusive notions of their own sufficiency and merit. He must labor to undeceive them. He knows that until convinced of sin, they will never cordially submit to Christ. He knows, that if they continue to regard themselves with complacency and satisfaction, they must perish everlastingly. Bear then, my brethren, bear with ministers of this description: "for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Do they strive to correct your erroneous sentiments of the goodness of your own heart? Do they unfold

the spiritual import of the law, and point out your numerous transgressions of its holy precepts? Call them not your enemies. Say not, "We hate them; for they do not prophesy good concerning us, but evil." They are your real friends. They love your souls. At the risk of incurring your displeasure, of provoking your animadversions, they would testify their love to your souls. Report not of them, that they take delight in dealing out reproof. If they wound, it is that you may be more effectually healed. While they wound, they tenderly sympathise in the pain which they inflict. They rejoice to bind up the broken heart. Gladly would they lead you into the paths of pleasantness and peace. They would be "helpers of your joy." Suffer then from them the word of exhortation. "Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Receive them as the faithful witnesses of the truth, "the servants of the most high God, which shew unto you the way of salvation."

3. We may hence also take occasion to reflect on that disposition of heart, which Christ requires of his people. "Come and follow me." An unreserved submission to his will, a readiness to part with all things at his command, to encounter all things for his sake, form indispensable features in the character of true Christians. "They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."—"Whosoever," says our Lord, "does not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Examine yourselves, my brethren, on this point. Is there in your heart no idol which usurps the place of Christ? Do you lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset you? Having found the pearl of great price, are you prepared to sell all that you have and buy it? Many, who receive the word with joy, in time of tribulation, when the sincerity of their professions is put to the trial, fall away. Many who for a season have walked with Christ, have at last forsaken him, "having loved this present world." Beware of imitating these examples. Beware of retaining a secret, unsuspected attachment to the things of the present life. Pray for faith. Pray for singleness of heart. Pray that "being rooted and grounded in love," you may follow the Lord fully. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus!"

SERMON XXXVIII.

Christ the Beloved, and the Friend of his People.

SONG OF SOLOMON, v. 16.

This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O Daughters of Jerusalem.

“WHAT think ye of Christ?” is one of the most important inquiries which can be addressed to us. For, on our just conceptions and accurate knowledge of this divine person, not only our usefulness, our consistency, our comfort, but even our very existence, as Christians, depends. “This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”* Blessed is the man who can truly adopt the declaration of the church in the text; and speaking of Christ can exclaim, in the language of triumphant faith, “This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.”

In discoursing on these interesting words, I shall consider them as descriptive of two important particulars;—of the character and of the privilege of true Christians. They love Christ: that is their character. They have Christ for a friend: that is their privilege.

I. Christ is the Beloved of his people. Whatever sentiments other persons may entertain of Christ, his people love him. “To them which believe, he is precious.”† It is the distinguishing characteristic of true Christians, that they are devoted to the service of a master, “Whom having not seen, they love.”‡ Are they occupied in patient, laborious, self-denying exertions? “The love of Christ constraineth them.” On him their desires are supremely and habitually fixed. They have no conceptions of happiness, of peace, or of safety, with which he is not associated. He is the sun who cheers and gilds their prospect. If he “hideth his face they are troubled.” Nothing they deem so dreadful as a separation from him. To “be with him, and to be-

* John, xvii. 3.

† 1 Peter, ii. 7.

‡ 1 Peter, i. 8.

hold his glory," constitutes, in their estimation, the sum of heavenly felicity. In a word, does Christ inquire of St. Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" The heart of every true Christian vibrates in unison with the apostle's answer, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."*

But the love which Christians bear to Christ will more fully appear from considering the grounds of it. Why do his people love him? "What is their beloved more than another beloved?"

They love him for his own great and glorious perfections. Christ in himself is "altogether lovely." In him all beauty centers. In him, whatever qualities excite admiration, or engage esteem, whatever excellence adorns, dignifies, or endears the character, unite without diminution or alloy. The mysterious glory of his person, the unsearchable riches of his grace, his wonderful condescension, his unspeakable majesty, his love which passeth knowledge, his compassion and faithfulness, his justice, his wisdom, and his holiness, form altogether a bright assemblage of perfections, before which every created excellence sinks into obscurity. From the unbelieving world, indeed, these perfections are awfully concealed. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."† In their sight, Christ "hath no form nor comeliness; and when they see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him." But while "these things are hidden from the wise and prudent, they are revealed unto babes." Christ manifests himself unto his people. On them he has bestowed a spiritual sight. To them he has communicated a spiritual taste. In their eyes "how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty."‡ What is the language of their admiring love? "It was a true report that we heard of thy acts and of thy wisdom; howbeit we believed not the words until we came, and our eyes have seen it; and behold! the half was not told us.—Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king to do judgment and justice."§

But the people of Christ not only love him for his own

* John, xxi. 16. † 2 Cor. iv. 4. ‡ Zech. ix. 17. § 1 Kings, x. 6, 7, 9.

great and glorious perfections; they also love him for his suitableness to their necessities. Great and numerous are the wants of his people; but in Christ they discover an ample supply provided. "For it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." Are they in a lost and perishing condition? Christ is a "Saviour and a great one." Are they blind and ignorant? In Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Are they tied and bound with the chain of their sins? Christ "proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound." Are they weak and helpless? Christ "will give strength to his people. He is a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress." In a word, Christ is a remedy exactly suited to every want. He is "an hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."* Thus all-sufficient, thus fully qualified to be "a very present help in time of trouble;" can his people desist from loving him? His very suitableness endears him to them. He is the "one thing needful." How shall they not esteem him precious?

But they possess other and still stronger grounds for their attachment to him. The people of Christ love him for the special benefits which he hath conferred upon them. In many particulars they have themselves "tasted that the Lord is gracious."

They have experienced the freeness of his love. "He found them when they sought him not.—Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, *they* went on frowardly in the way of their own hearts." Christ "saw their way and healed them." When he might justly have destroyed them in their iniquities, "his thoughts were thoughts of peace and not of evil." When they were dead in trespasses and sins, he said unto them, *Live*.† He roused their sleeping consciences. He removed the veil of sin, of prejudice, of unbelief. He "brought them by a way that they knew not: he led them in paths that they had not known. He made darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." They have been unprofitable servants: but he hath not forsaken them. They have been "dull of hear-

* Isaiah, xxxii. 2. † Ezekiel. xvi. 6.

ing ;" slow of heart to believe ; but he has borne with their infirmities. Their progress has little corresponded with the opportunities afforded : but he " has not despised the day of small things." Too often have they provoked his wrath ; but he hath not cast them off for ever. He " hath not suffered his whole displeasure to arise. He has healed their backslidings : he has loved them freely : his anger has been turned away." Shall they not love him for these things ? He hath " drawn them with loving kindness." He hath " drawn them with cords of a man, with bands of love."

They have experienced the efficacy of his pardoning mercy. They have sinned greatly against the Lord : but the Lord hath put away their sin. Weary and heavy laden with a sense of their unworthiness, they have come unto Christ for pardon, and have found rest unto their souls. " They sought the Lord and he heard them, and delivered them from all their fears. They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed."* He has bound up their broken heart. He has healed their wounded spirit. He hath " given them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Is the guilt of sin removed ? Is their conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God ? Are they delivered from the wrath to come ? Can they draw near with confidence to the throne of grace ? Do they rejoice in hope of the glory of God ? Christ is the author of these blessings. He has purchased them by his blood. He has applied them by his Spirit. " He speaks peace unto his people, and to his saints." Shall they not love Him, who gave himself for them that he might become their peace ? Because much has been forgiven, therefore shall they love him much.

They have experienced the power of his sanctifying grace. By nature they were the slaves of the devil, of the world, and of the flesh. They " served divers lusts and pleasures. They yielded their members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." But a glorious change has been wrought. They are recovered out of the snare of the devil. They overcome the world. They no longer walk after the flesh. " Being made free from sin, they are become the servants of righteousness." To what cause do they ascribe

* Psalm, xxxiv. 4, 5.

this glorious change? To themselves; to their own wisdom, goodness, strength? No. To Christ; to his grace, his power, his Spirit. He has "overcome the strong man armed." He has "delivered them from this present evil world." He has taught them to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." Christ has made them free. His own arm has brought salvation. He has supplied them with power and strength to have victory. Shall they not love their deliverer? Shall they not love him who has done so great things for them?

They have experienced the faithfulness of his word. He has "given to them exceeding great and precious promises:" promises of succor in distress; promises of sanctified affliction; promises of answer to prayer; promises of favorable providences; the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The truth of these promises Christ's people, on many occasions, have found. They have trusted in him and have been holpen. They have called upon him and have been delivered. "For a season (if need be) they have been in heaviness through manifold temptations." To one affliction another has rapidly succeeded. Their soul has fainted in them. "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy clean gone forever?" Such has been the language of their desponding thoughts. But in due time the Lord has appeared for them. They "have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." They have found reason to confess that "his judgments are right, and that in faithfulness he hath afflicted them." The path which they ought to choose, has at times been dark and intricate. Unlooked-for obstacles have impeded their progress, and distracted their attention. Their feet have well nigh slipped. But "the Lord hath upheld their steps." He hath "preserved the way of his saints." They have "heard a voice behind them, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it; when they have turned to the right hand or when they have turned to the left."* Shall not his people love him for these things? Shall they not "love him, because he hath heard their voice and their supplication?"

Such are the grounds of that love which true Christians bear to Christ. They love him for his own glorious per-

* Isaiah, xxx. 21.

sections. They love him for his suitableness to their necessities. They love him for the special benefits which he has conferred upon them. "This is my beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem!" Is not my Beloved more than another Beloved?

II. Christ is the Friend of his people.

This is their privilege. They have a friend, "in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The Pharisees reproachfully denominated Christ, "the Friend of sinners." But it is a title in which he glories. He is the Friend of all penitent sinners. He was their Friend on earth. He is their Friend in heaven. He is "the propitiation for their sins, and their advocate with the Father. The privilege of having Christ for a Friend will more particularly appear from considering what a Friend he is.

1. Christ is a Friend, who tenderly loves his people, and is cordially attached to their interests. He is not an indifferent spectator of their concerns. He anxiously desires their felicity. Of his love to them he has exhibited the most unquestionable proofs. Had he not loved them with the tenderest love, would he for them have been made in the likeness of sinful flesh? Would he for them have endured poverty, pain, and ignominy, the contradiction of sinners, the malice of Satan, the wrath of God? Look at the cross, and catch some faint conceptions of his immeasurable love. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.—" But while we were yet enemies Christ died for us.* Has lapse of time, has change of circumstances, abated the ardor of the Redeemer's love? Exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, does he love his people with a less fervent love, than when he was on earth? The relations in which the Scripture represents him as standing connected with his people, evince the strength and tenderness of his affection for them. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He bestows on them the endearing appellation of children. "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me."† What blessings may they not expect from a father's love? Nay, he describes his love for them as surpassing even that of a mother for her infant. "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea,

* John, xv. 13. Rom. v. 8. 10. † Hebrews, ii. 11. 13.

they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”* Christ is the husband of his people. No image can more strongly depict his love for their persons, and his solicitude for their happiness. He speaks of their interest as identified with his own. “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of my eye.—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”†

2. Christ is an all-powerful Friend. The ability of a friend to serve us, might fall short of his inclination. However cordially attached to our interests, he might be unable to promote them. But the power of Christ is infinite, as his love is immeasurable. “All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth.”‡ The kingdoms of nature, of providence, of grace, are under his control. He is “the mighty God,”§ the Creator and Upholder of all things. With what confidence may not the people of Christ repose, on such an all-powerful Friend? Into what difficulties can they be plunged, from which he cannot extricate them? With what enemies can they be called to contend, from which he cannot protect them? are they afflicted with sickness? He can say unto the pestilence, Go, and it goeth. Are they oppressed with want? He can send his ravens and feed them. Are they immured in prisons? He can commission his angels to deliver them. Are they in perils of water? The winds and the waves obey his voice. Are they exposed to ravenous beasts? He can stop the mouths of lions. Are they cast into the burning furnace? He can quench the violence of fire. In spiritual concerns is he less mighty to save? Hear his own declaration: “I will give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Hear the declaration of his apostle, St. Paul: “I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”|| What comfortable declarations to the people of Christ! Satan may desire to have them that he may sift them as wheat; but stronger is he who is with them, than he who is against them. In themselves they are weak and ready to fall: but “underneath are the everlasting arms.” He who “loved them, and gave himself for them, is able to save them to the ut-

* Isaiah. xlix. 15. † Zech. ii. 8. Matthew, xxv. 40. ‡ Matthew, xxviii. 18. § Isaiah, ix. 6. || John, x. 28. 2 Tim. i. 12.

termost." He "will keep them by his power through faith unto salvation."

3. Christ is an unchangeable Friend. However powerful our friends might be, however cordially attached to our interests; yet the apprehension that his protection might possibly be withdrawn from us, or the warmth of his affection might hereafter be diminished, would in some degree shake the stability and abate the ardor of our confidence. But the people of Christ have no just grounds for such apprehensions. He is the true Friend, who changeth not. A man may be influenced by caprice in selecting the objects of his favor: or by injurious misrepresentations he may be persuaded to abandon those whose cause he has espoused. A change in their outward circumstances may damp his zeal in their service: or the discovery that they are less deserving of his kindness than he had formerly imagined them to be, may induce him to withhold his support. But none of these causes can operate to impair the love of Christ for his people. All his proceedings are the dictates of unerring and infinite wisdom. "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."* The world may mistake or may calumniate the character of his people. But Christ "knoweth them that are his."† He sees and approves their hearts. No change in their outward circumstances can estrange his affection from them. It is not their poverty or affluence, it is not their external meanness, or worldly grandeur, which attracts his notice. He did not "set his love upon them" for the sake of any merit which he previously discovered, or expected hereafter to discover in them: but because he "delighteth in mercy:" because he "will be gracious to whom he will be gracious."‡ "Who then shall separate them from the love of Christ?" Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay in all these things they are more than conquerors through him who loved them.—Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord."§

* James, i. 17. Hebrews, xiii. 8. † 2 Tim. ii. 19. ‡ Exodus, xxxiii. 19. § Rom. viii. 35, 37, 38, 39.

4. Christ is a seasonable Friend. There are times and circumstances in which we peculiarly require the consolation and assistance of a friend. At such seasons his presence is doubly valuable. The friend who ministers to our support, when other friends forsake us, and when we stand most in need of his support, pre-eminently shews himself to be a friend. Such a Friend is Christ to his people. In the day of adversity they too often experience the insincerity of earthly friends, the vanity of all human reliances. But in such a season does Christ fail them? No. He is the "Friend who loveth at all times, the brother who is born for adversity."* In such a season his people feel his value. His presence cheers their gloomy path. His promises revive their fainting spirits. "When their father and their mother forsake them, the Lord taketh them up."

Behold that emaciated form agonized with pain sinking under the weight of accumulated disease. By to-morrow's dawn he will be a lifeless corpse. What, in this trying season, is the support which he receives? He has trusted in riches. Do riches now sustain him? Do they illumine his cheerless prospect? Do they allay his guilty fears? He has placed his confidence in man. Does man now minister to his relief? Where are the gay companions of his mirthful hours? Where is the servile herd of sycophants, who once hung upon his lips? Where are the admiring crowds who sounded forth his praises and idolized his name? All, all are fled. In such a trying season, does Christ forsake his people? Does he leave them comfortless and unsupported? Visit the chamber of the dying Christian. Mark his placid brow; his eye glistening with hope; his countenance, from which even the advancing hand of death cannot displace the smile. Whence springs this sweet serenity, this calm, triumphant cheerfulness? Christ is with him. Christ has smoothed the bed of death, and quiets every fear. "Does death alarm? I have removed its sting. Does the thought of separation from earthly friends distress? "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them, and let thy widows trust in me." Does the apprehension of dissolution terrify? "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; —Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen

* Proverbs, xvii. 17.

thee ; I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." *

But there is another awful season fast approaching. "The dead, small and great, shall stand before God ; and the books shall be opened ; and the dead shall be judged out of those things which shall be written in the books, according to their works." In that fearful judgment, of what inconceivable value will be a Friend to plead our cause, to answer the demands of the law, to rebuke the adversary ! Such a Friend in that day will Christ be found to his people. He will deliver them from going down into the pit. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ?—I have redeemed them : they are mine." † For them I shed my blood. For them I fulfilled all righteousness. They are my friends : the people of my hand, the sheep of my pasture. Who is he that condemneth ? "Come ye blessed of my Father ; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

My brethren, contemplate the unspeakable privilege of having such a Friend. The unbelieving world, which knoweth not Christ, may form erroneous sentiments of his people. Ignorant of the heavenly principle by which they are influenced, it may "account their life madness." Ignorant of the glorious privilege which they enjoy, it may "esteem them stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." But are such conceptions just ? The true Christian, acting under the habitual and uniform impulse of love to his exalted Saviour, is the only wise and consistent character upon earth. Confiding in such a Friend, he exclusively possesses a never-failing source of the purest and most substantial felicity. Of all the sons of men, he alone, with reason, can adopt the exulting declaration of the prophet : "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall : yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." ‡

But who then is the true Christian ? Who can justly appropriate to himself this character ? Who is there among us that, speaking of Christ, with humble confidence can say, "This is my friend ?" To this question, my brethren,

* Jer. xlix. 11. Isaiah, xliii. 2. xli. 10. † Isaiah, xliii. 1. ‡ Habak. iii. 17, 18.

I would reply by proposing another inquiry. Who is there among us that, speaking of Christ, can truly say, "This is my Beloved?" If you partake of the privilege of his people, you also partake of their character. If Christ be your Friend, you have the testimony of your heart that you love him. Have you this testimony? Of such infinite importance to your peace, comfort, and safety, is a clear decision on this point, that I shall proceed to specify some marks, by which you may judge whether you love Christ or not.

1. If you love Christ, you love his cause. You cannot indeed be attached to your Master, and feel indifferent to his interests. What is the cause of Christ? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." In opposition to the usurped dominion of Satan, Christ has established a kingdom; a kingdom, which commences in grace here, and will terminate in glory hereafter. Of this kingdom, all true Christians are subjects. Reclaimed from the servitude of sin, they are become the servants of Christ. In the increase and prosperity of this kingdom, he "sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." In the increase and prosperity of this kingdom, his subjects cannot but exalt. You cannot belong to this kingdom, and yet deem it a matter of little moment, whether the interests of Christ, or the interest of Satan, prevail. If you truly love Christ, the success of his cause in the world will lie near your heart. That his kingdom *may* come, is your prayer. That his kingdom *will* come, is your joy. With the angels you now rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. In hope, you already anticipate that glorious time, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."*

2. If you love Christ, you love his people. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."† In the nature of things it cannot be otherwise. The people of Christ are his representatives on earth. Faint, indeed, is their present resemblance to him. Far short do they fall of their divine original. But still they bear his likeness. The same humility, meekness, patience, purity, disinterestedness, the same love of God and of man,

* Rev. xi. 15. † 1 John, v. 1.

the same holy abhorrence of sin, which shone so resplendently in Christ, shine also, with however diminished lustre, in his people. Can you love those graces pourtrayed in Christ, and not love them reflected in his people? Can you love Christ and not feel a decided partiality for those, who, even in a very imperfect manner, resemble him? No. If you "love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," his image, wherever discovered, will be the object of your love. By whatever name it may be distinguished, in whatever sect or party it may be found, whether it inhabit a palace or a cottage, "that mind, which was also in Christ Jesus," will attract your esteem, will engage your affections. By this secret bias of your heart, your own conduct will insensibly be governed. "You will do good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the household of faith." Towards all men you will exercise a kind and benevolent disposition; but it is from among those "who have obtained like precious faith with yourselves," that you will select the objects of your special regard and friendship. "The faithful in Christ Jesus" you will account the truly honorable on earth; the "excellent, in whom is all your delight."

3. If you love Christ, you love his ordinances. It is in his ordinances that Christ more especially meets his people, and manifests himself unto them. It is in his ordinances that "he restoreth the souls of his saints." They cannot then but love those ordinances, in which they have been quickened, comforted, refreshed. They cannot but desire to "see the power and glory of the Lord, as they have seen them in the sanctuary." What a prominent feature in the character of David is his attachment to the house and worship of the Lord! How bitterly does he lament exclusion from them! How earnestly does he pray for restoration to them! "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech; that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!—As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?—O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God, my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God." Corresponding with these sentiments of David, if you truly love Christ,

will be your sentiments. Though the frame of your mind may not at all times permit you to adopt this glowing and animated language ; though the fervor of your religious affections will too often subside, and the fire even abate at the altar ; yet the prevailing and settled inclination of your heart will accord with that of the Psalmist. With him you will be enabled decidedly to say, " Lord, I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth.—One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

4. If you love Christ you love to do his will. Of all the proofs by which love to Christ is attested, obedience to his commands is the most decisive. It is that proof, without which every other attestation is insufficient to evince the reality of your love. Unattended indeed by the other marks already adduced, the sincerity of an obedience, apparently the most exemplary, might be justly suspected. But, on the other hand, unaccompanied by obedience, the most ardent profession of love to Christ, of zeal in his service, of attachment to his cause, to his people, to his ordinances, must be adjudged to be false and spurious : the effect, not of Christian love, but of pride or obstinacy, of a deceived and self-opinionated mind, of party spirit, of unsanctified affections. Obedience is the corner stone which unites the whole edifice together, and renders it compact and solid. Obedience is that test, which tries the genuineness of every pretension, and distinguishes the sterling metal from every counterfeit. Obedience is the fruit, by which Christ himself requires his people to evidence their love. " If ye love me, keep my commandments.—Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."* Obedience is the fruit by which, if you love Christ, you evidence your love. Your obedience indeed is, at the best, defective and unprofitable ; but it is sincere, it is cordial, it is universal. You search the Scriptures, that you may know the will of Christ. So far as you discover his will, you desire implicitly to perform it. You neither attempt nor wish to substitute any other rule of conduct. You sin not as others sin, as you yourselves once sinned, with allowance and delight. Sin is

* John, xiv. 15. xv. 14.

your burden, your shame, your grief. Your earnest wish, your constant prayer, your daily endeavor, is to grow in grace, to be more and more conformed to the "image of God, in righteousness and true holiness." Your language is, "O that there was such an heart in me, that I might fear the Lord, and keep all his commandments always!"

Does conscience, on this examination, testify in your favor? Can you justly conclude, on the grounds adduced, that you love Christ? Take to yourselves the full comfort which this conclusion warrants. Is Christ your Beloved? Be assured that he is also your Friend. Be assured that he is a friend cordially attached to your interests: your all-powerful, your unchangeable Friend: a Friend who will never leave you nor forsake you: who, at those seasons in which you most need a friend, in the time of adversity, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, by his presence, his consolations, and his support, will manifest the strength and tenderness of his affection for you. Confide in such a Friend with full assurance of faith. Rejoice in such a Friend with full assurance of hope. Dismiss every fear dishonorable to him, injurious to yourself. Live upon his fulness. Go on your way rejoicing. The day is fast approaching when He "*whom your soul loveth*" shall no longer be hidden from your sight. "*Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.*" In that day you shall lift up your heads with joy. With transport you shall welcome "the glorious appearing of your great God and Saviour.—Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."^{*} You shall then "see him as he is," your Beloved and your Friend. You shall "enter into his joy." You shall "be over with the Lord," and shall "behold his glory."

But are there not some whose consciences testify against them? Some, whose hearts plainly bear witness to them, that they love not Christ? They have another Beloved. Some earthly idol is the object of their affections. "Other Lords have dominion over them." They love sin. They love the world. They love the flesh. My brethren, in what language shall I address you? You esteem it a light thing to withhold your heart from Christ. Not to love him,

^{*} Isaiah, xxv. 9.

cannot in your estimation, be accounted sinful. But you are grossly deceived. Is it no sin not to love him who so pre-eminently deserves your love? Is it no sin not to love him who loved you, and gave himself for you? If it be no sin not to love Christ, whence proceeds that prophetic imprecation of the apostle, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha" accursed, when our Lord shall come to judgment?*

View the subject in another light. If Christ be not your Beloved, he is not your Friend. Can any of the objects which you are preferring to him, supply the want of such a Friend? At present perhaps you despise his friendship. Every thing smiles around you. Prosperity crowns your worldly affairs. Health and strength are yours. But will these things be always so? Will your mountain never be removed? The next moment may crumble it to atoms. Adversity may rapidly undermine every foundation on which you are now confiding. Death must finally overturn them all. What in those seasons will you think of Christ? What will you then give for such a Friend?

But adversity may not come to warn you. Death may sweep you away without affording any time for reflection. Conscience may sleep on this side of the grave. Carry then your thoughts forward to that awful day, "in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth." In that day you shall hear the voice of Christ. You shall see him "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." But how will you "abide the day of his coming?" How will you "stand, when he appeareth?" When dragged before his dread tribunal, in what language will you express the horrors of your mind? "Hast thou found us, O, our enemy?" "This is He whom we refused to love. This is He whose friendship we rejected. Rocks, fall on us. Mountains, cover us; shield us from the wrath of the Lamb. "O that we had been wise, that we had considered our latter end!" Such will be your helpless consternation, such your ineffectual wishes in that great and terrible day of the Lord. May the anticipation of this dreadful scene now produce its proper effect upon you! May it lead you now to seek Christ for your Friend! At present he waiteth to be gracious. He

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

extends to you the golden sceptre of his love. He invites you to come unto him for pardon, peace, and holiness. "And the spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."*

SERMON XXXIX.

The Sin and Danger of neglecting the great Salvation of the Gospel.

HEBREWS, ii. 3.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?

CONTEMPLATED in every point of view, the Salvation proclaimed in the Gospel is a *great* Salvation. Whether we look at the source from which it originates, or at the objects to whom it is extended; at the depth of misery from which it proposes to deliver mankind, or at the height of glory to which it promises to exalt them; at the long train of prophecies by which it was introduced, or at the stupendous display of miracles, by which it was established; we cannot but be deeply impressed with a conviction of its magnitude and importance. There is one circumstance, however, which wonderfully augments these impressions, the unparalleled excellence and dignity of the Person, by whom this Salvation was perfected. That God should send his Son to be the Saviour of the world; that Son, "who is the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power;"† stamps on the work of Redemption a character of magnificence, which no other consideration can impart. Great indeed, beyond conception great, must be that Salvation, which so glorious a Saviour purchased with his own blood, and now completes by his intercession at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

* Rev. xxii. 17. † Heb. i. 3.

Would God ! that the reception, which this Salvation encounters in the world, was proportioned to its importance ! Would God ! that mankind did in general regard it with that serious attention to which it is so pre-eminently entitled ! But in every age of the church the ministers of the Gospel have had too much reason to adopt the complaining language of the prophet, " Who hath believed our report ? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ? " * In every age of the church numbers have neglected this great Salvation. With the persons in the parable, they have " made light " of the invitations of the Gospel. Intent only on realizing their worldly prospects, on prosecuting their several schemes of profit or of amusement, when bidden to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, they have " refused to come— with one consent have begun to make excuse ; " and in a profane disregard of the blessings provided for their perishing souls, " have gone their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize."

To persons of this description, the expostulation in the text is forcibly addressed. It remonstrates with them on the folly and wickedness of their conduct, and on the certainty of that destruction to which they stand exposed. " How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation ? " Whatever flattering hope of final deliverance from the wrath to come, those who neglect the great Salvation of the Gospel may secretly entertain, it is a vain and groundless presumption. They may lull their consciences to sleep with the soothing notion, that they shall escape at last ; but *how* shall they escape ? What means shall be devised ? What avenue shall be disclosed ? The question implies the strongest actual negation. They shall not escape. Those, who live and die in the neglect of so great Salvation, must inevitably perish. Their case is irremediable ; their doom unalterably fixed. No way, no hope, no possibility of escape remains.

It is this momentous truth, which I purpose, on the present occasion, to discuss. God grant, that the discussion may prove instrumental in awakening some from that state of criminal and dangerous insensibility, into which their souls are so awfully plunged !

* Isaiah, liii. 1.

The first argument which I shall adduce, in confirmation of the truth under discussion, results from the very nature and constitution of things. They who neglect the great Salvation of the Gospel, must, from the necessary connection between causes and effects, be involved in everlasting destruction. For what is the Salvation of the Gospel? It is a Salvation from sin. Sin is the disease of human nature: a disease, dreadful and ruinous in its consequences, and utterly incurable by any means within the reach of man's discovery. But for this tremendous disorder, the Gospel discloses a sovereign remedy. It unfolds a method of restraining the progress of sin, of repairing its fatal ravages, of restoring the soul to its full health and native vigour. This is the glory of the Gospel; the peculiar ground, on which it commends itself to our notice, and claims universal acceptance.

The Gospel, and the Gospel only, makes adequate provision for remitting the penal consequences of sin. Sin, as an act of rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven, exposes the transgressor to merited and everlasting punishment; subjects him to the sentence of the violated law, which denounces an awful curse on disobedience.* Except this sentence be reversed, judgment must unavoidably follow. But *how* shall this sentence be reversed? *How* shall the guilt of sin be pardoned, and its penalty be remitted? This is a question which has ever baffled the inquiries of human reason, and has made foolish the wisdom of the world. Whatever hopes or sentiments men might entertain on this subject, it has been reserved for the Gospel to proclaim the *certainty* of God's disposition to pardon sinners, as well as to designate the *only way*, in which that pardon will be extended to them. It has been reserved for the Gospel to reveal a Saviour, even the Eternal Son of God, who himself suffered for sinners, bare their sins in his own body on the tree, and redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. It has been reserved for the Gospel to declare, that through the name of this glorious Saviour, "whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."†—But wherein, it may be asked, did the necessity exist for the interposition of so great a Saviour? Could not the criminal be absolved from punishment, except

* Compare 1 John, iii. 4. Deut. xxvii. 26. with Matthew, xxv. 41. 46.
† Acts, x. 43.

through the death of God's Incarnate Son? What forbade the Almighty to grant remission of sins, unless purchased at such an inestimable price? His own perfections forbade him. His infinite justice, his essential Holiness, a Regard to the honor of his Law, and to his character, as Moral Governor of the Universe, forbade him. They had forbidden him to spare the rebellious angels. How then could he spare rebellious, apostate Man? Should he shew mercy to sinners without the intervention of some competent means which might mark the enormity of sin, his just abhorrence of it, and his fiery wrath against it, what confusion might not such an act of lenity have introduced into the world of spirits? What suspicions of the Holiness of God, what encouragement to trample on his laws, what hopes of sinning with impunity, might not such a proceeding have excited throughout his universal empire? Here then the necessity for the Incarnation and Sufferings of the Son of God originated. By the Spectacle exhibited at Calvary, all such suspicions, such encouragements, such hopes, are entirely and eternally precluded. Let Angels and Arch-angels, let all the Hosts of Heaven, Principalities, Dominions, Powers, Thrones, survey the Cross of Jesus, and there be taught, when the Almighty is disposed to pardon sin, what is the nature of the Atonement, which he demands. Let them see, that when God maketh inquisition for sin, he spareth not his own Son, if that Son be found in the Sinner's place; and, thus reflected in the sacred mirror of the Gospel, let them contemplate and adore the incomprehensible Perfections of Jehovah. Such is the adequate provision, which the Gospel makes for remitting the penal consequences of sin. It discovers the only way, in which God can be just, and yet the Justifier of the Sinner. It directs us to look with a believing reliance on that Saviour, by the one offering of whose body, once for all, those otherwise irreconcilable attributes of infinite Holiness and infinite Mercy are harmoniously exercised; every end of punishment is completely accomplished; and every obstacle to the most unlimited display of grace and mercy effectually removed.

The Gospel, and the Gospel only, makes adequate provision for obviating the effects of man's innate and deep depravity. Man is by nature carnal, sold under sin. Sin is the element in which he lives. Every power, every faculty

of the soul is corrupt. He "is filthy and abominable, and drinketh iniquity like water." He is "wise to do evil, but to do good he has no knowledge."* Far from delighting in holiness, he "has pleasure in unrighteousness." Far from walking in communion with God, he is "alienated from the divine life through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart."† Thus destitute of a resemblance to God, of a meetness of partaking of the holy felicity of heaven, man is justly and necessarily excluded from the mansions of the blessed. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness?"‡ Both reason and revelation unite in testifying, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" that into the habitation of his presence and glory there "shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth;" that none but "the pure in heart shall see God."§ From these premises one consequence clearly follows. Man, in order to be happy, must undergo an important change. He must "be renewed in the spirit of his mind." His soul must be freed from the power and the love of sin, and be induced to take delight in the will of God, and in the ways of holiness. But how is the change to be effected? Can man renew his own heart? Can he, by any efforts or resolutions of his own, restore himself to the image of God? Let those, who under a real sense of their depravity have made the trial, be consulted; and they will tell us how vain and delusive is the attempt. Can the restraints of education, can the powers of reason, can the reproofs of conscience eradicate the innate propensities of the heart to evil? Experience demonstrates the inefficacy of such expedients. What is the history of the world, but a continued record of the triumphs of sin over every barrier which nature has attempted to interpose in its way; but a practical exposure of the futility of those devices, by which men have endeavored to stem the torrent of inherent corruption? The evil, however, is not without a cure. Man is not necessitated for ever to continue the Slave of Sin. The Gospel unfolds a remedy. It proclaims deliverance. As it reveals an all-sufficient Saviour for the removal of our guilt, and for our recovery to the divine favor, so it reveals an all-sufficient Sanctifier for the renewal of our hearts, and for our restoration to the image

* Jo's. xv. 16. Jer. iv. 22. † Ephes. iv. 18. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14.
§ Heb. xli. 14. Rev. xxi. 27. Matt. v. 8.

of our Maker. It discloses to us a Divine Person, who according to the economy of the Covenant of Grace, undertakes, begins, advances, and in due time completes the sanctification of our nature : who is the blessed Agent in imparting life, and light, and vigor, to our souls ; who helps our infirmities ; infuses into us all holy desires ; guides us by his secret suggestions ; and thus gradually prepares us for future glory. It teaches us, that to all, who feel their need and pray for help, this heavenly Comforter vouchsafes his influence ; that no degree of previous guilt precludes the communication of his aid ; that no inveterate state of the disorder can frustrate the efficacy of his healing power. He lends a favorable ear to the vilest sinner, who implores his grace. He cleanseth the most polluted soul, which diligently uses the means prescribed.

Such is the adequate provision which the Gospel makes for obviating the effects of man's innate and deep depravity. And now, from this representation of the case, observe the forcible tendency of the argument adduced in confirming the truth under discussion. "How shall they escape who neglect so great Salvation?" If such be the great Salvation of the Gospel, if the Gospel makes the only effectual provision for remitting the penalty of sin, for rescuing the soul from the bondage of original corruption ; it follows, as a necessary consequence from the very nature of things, that they who neglect to appropriate the benefits of this provision to themselves, must be utterly excluded from every reasonable hope, from all possibility of escaping eternal misery. Should the drowning man neglect to lay hold of the only hand stretched out to save him ; should the criminal neglect to use the only mode of securing a pardon ; should the sick man neglect to follow the only prescription which can administer a cure ; what, in all these several instances, must be the inevitable consequence ? Death. What, by parity of reasoning, must inevitably be the case with those, who neglect the Salvation of the Gospel ? Neglecting to improve the only opportunity vouchsafed to them of procuring the removal of their guilt ; they must sink down for ever under the curse and burden of unpardoned sin. Omitting to apply the only remedy, by which their evil nature can be renewed and cleansed, they must continue evil and unclean for ever ; and consequently be assigned to endless torment

in that place, the only place, which they are fitted to inhabit, the place, prepared for the devil and his angels. And how shall they escape?

Another argument, which I shall adduce in confirmation of the truth under discussion, arises from the peculiar and aggravated guilt of neglecting so great Salvation. The Gospel indeed commends itself to our notice under the interesting form of a Remedy. But it is not a Remedy which we are at liberty to neglect, without subjecting ourselves to any heavier consequences, than the neglect itself will necessarily entail. It is a Remedy which we are constrained by the most powerful obligations to apply : a Remedy, the neglect of which argues, not only the most daring folly, but the most malignant wickedness ; and consequently involves a degree of criminality, which exhibits in a still stronger light the impossibility of escaping.

To neglect the Salvation of the Gospel is to violate a positive command of God. The injunction to "repent, and believe the Gospel,"* is an injunction imperatively addressed to all, to whom the Gospel is sent. Whether they will submit or not to this injunction, is the grand trial, to which, under the dispensation of mercy, they are exposed. Let this point be clearly understood, and seriously weighed. Man, in his present fallen state, is not required to fabricate a righteousness of his own, and by his obedience to the law to obtain eternal life : for this would be a requisition, with which he is utterly unable to comply. But he is required, in proof of his submission to the divine authority, to receive and embrace the Gospel, and, in a faithful use of the appointed means, to "work out his own Salvation with fear and trembling." When the Jews inquired of our Lord, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom he hath sent." St. John inculcates the same truth, when he says, "This is the commandment of God, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment.—God (says St. Paul) now commandeth all men every where to repent."† And what is the repentance of which the apostle speaks, but a conversion from sin to God, through the mercy offered in the Gospel? How then can we neglect the

* Mark, i. 15. † John, vi. 28, 29. 1 John, iii. 23. Acts, xvii. 30.

Salvation of the Gospel, without incurring the charge of disobedience to the divine command?—Let the peculiar nature of the command also be considered as an aggravation of the sin of disobeying it. Had it been an arbitrary injunction of Sovereign Power, still our obligation to comply with it would not have been diminished. God has a right to impose on us any command which he may think fit, without explaining the motives, or assigning the reasons of his conduct. But, in this instance, he has not acted thus. While he commands us to receive and obey the Gospel, he condescends to point out the reasonableness and the excellency of the command; to urge us to consider our own individual interest in complying with it; and to excite our attention to the duty enjoined by such a display of signs and wonders, as are calculated to impress us with the deepest convictions of its importance. Under such circumstances, disobedience is attended with peculiar guilt. The same truth may be inferred from the signal judgments denounced against those who neglect this great Salvation. We are told, that it will be more tolerable in the last day for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for such persons. The apostles were directed to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them. Christ himself adduces the neglect of his Gospel as one express cause of condemnation. “He that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.”* And we are assured, that when “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire,” the especial objects of his vengeance will be those, “that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel.”† Surely such representations would not have been given, if the charge of neglecting this great Salvation were not marked before God, as a sin of the most malignant and aggravated nature. How then shall they, who persist in committing this sin, escape?

But further, to neglect this great salvation is not only to violate a positive command of God, but also to pour contempt on his most glorious perfections. The Gospel is the richest display of mercy to fallen man, the consummation of the divine wisdom and love. Such is the light in which it is constantly exhibited in Scripture. It was because God so

* John, iii. 18.

† 2 Thes. i. 8.

loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that we might live through him. Having bestowed on us this unspeakable gift, he hath a right to expect that we shall value it accordingly. Having sent his son to be the Minister of his mercy, the Propitiation for our sins, he hath a right to expect that we shall reverence his Son. Having manifested in such a wonderful manner the great love wherewith he loved us, he hath a right to expect that we shall thankfully, and cordially embrace the great salvation thus extended to us. Hath the Father so loved us, as not to withhold from us his Son, his only Son? Hath the Son so loved us, as to purchase our souls with his own blood? Hath the eternal Spirit so loved us, as to condescend to dwell in our polluted hearts? And shall none of these things move us? Shall we regard them with indifference and contempt? Shall we say, by our conduct at least, if not with our lips, 'We despise this great Salvation. The love of the Father, the mercy of the Son, the grace of the Spirit, are alike disregarded by us. Though the Father calls to us by a voice from heaven, we will not hear. Though the Son tenderly expostulates with us from the cross, we will not listen. Though the Spirit graciously pleads in our hearts, we will not obey.' Such is, in truth, the language of those who neglect this great Salvation. And how shall they escape? Not only the curse of the violated law, but the far heavier curse of the slighted Gospel cries aloud for vengeance on them. They "have trodden under foot the Son of God, have counted the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, have done despite unto the Spirit of Grace;" and how shall they escape the damnation of hell? Offended Justice, and insulted Mercy, demand their ruin. The united voices of the assembled universe proclaim their doom, 'Let them "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and, from the glory of his power."'

Such, my brethren, from the nature and constitution of things; such, from the aggravated guilt incurred, must be the doom of those who neglect so great Salvation. Seeing then the infinite importance of this conclusion, suffer me to make a close and serious application of the subject to your hearts and consciences.

Are you chargeable with that most desperate folly and wickedness, which it has been the object of the present dis-

passion to expose and condemn? To reply to this inquiry will not demand any deep penetration, any minute investigation into your views and conduct. The question reduces itself into a narrow compass. Are you neglecting the great Salvation of the Gospel? Are you living in a state of carelessness and security with respect to your eternal concerns? Are you taking no pains, at least no adequate pains, to examine and to ascertain the truth, the value, the excellence of the Gospel; to impress your minds with a feeling conviction of your own utter need of an interest in the atoning blood of Christ, and in the sanctifying operations of the Spirit? Or, holding these momentous doctrines with merely a speculative faith, are you omitting to promote their practical influence on your heart? Are you omitting, by constant prayer, by diligent study of the word of God, by a conscientious discharge of every duty, by a careful abstinence from every occupation which must necessarily impede your growth in grace and holiness, to improve the glorious talent committed to your trust? If the grand objects revealed in Scripture do not engage the first place in your soul, are not chosen with a decided preference, are not pursued with that humility and earnestness, without which they never can be attained, it is most evident that you are neglecting this great Salvation. You are involved in all the guilt, in all the danger, which attaches to that neglect.

Consider then how aggravated is that guilt, how inevitable that danger! You cannot escape. You have seen that you cannot escape. The arguments, on which this conclusion rests, you are utterly unable to disprove. You may now indeed make light of the guilt. You may contemplate the danger with indifference. But be sure your sin will one day find you out. Even now the wrath of God abideth on you. Hitherto you have experienced the greatness of the divine forbearance. The Lord hath not suffered his displeasure to arise. Hitherto he has continued, still he continues to you that glorious privilege which you so wickedly despise. But will his long-suffering never be exhausted? Have you not reason to fear lest he should withdraw his slighted mercy from you? Have you not reason to fear, lest he should swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest. O, my brethren, "beware, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold,

ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”*

Consider further the vanity, the worthlessness of those objects, for the sake of which you are neglecting so great Salvation. What will the world, with all its gilded toys avail, when you stand before the tribunal of God, and are summoned to account for your contemptuous disregard of his Gospel ! Will riches, will honors, will the flattering applauses of men, at that awful hour, avert the sword of vengeance ? Will they deliver you from going down to the pit ? No. They will only administer fuel to those flames, to which you will be assigned. For these things then will you persist in neglecting so great Salvation ? For a little transitory pleasure will you harter your immortal soul ? Like Ean, stigmatised with the title of *profane*, for a morsel of bread will you sell your birthright ? Remember, “ how that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected : for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”† You may hereafter bewail your foolish choice. When doomed to endure the consequences of your folly, you assuredly will bewail it. But lamentation and remorse will then be fruitless. That salvation, which you so long neglected, will then be sought in vain. “ Because I have called, saith the Lord, and ye refused : I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded : but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer : they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”‡

How will ye endure these things ? “ O then that ye were wise ; that ye would understand this, that ye would consider your latter end ! ”—that “ ye would know, even now in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace, before they are hid from your eyes—before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, the Lord turn it into the shadow of death, and make

* Acts, xii. 40, 41. † Heb. xii. 17. ‡ Prov. i. 24—31.

it gross darkness!"——that "to-day, while it is called to-day, ye would harden not your hearts!" For as yet the Lord is waiting to be gracious. He hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. He is "not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance."

SERMON XL.

The Life and Death of the Real Christian.

PHILIPPIANS, i. 21.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is Gain.

HAPPY would it be for us, my brethren, if we could all adopt this striking declaration with as much truth as the apostle originally made it. Highly desirable indeed was the state of mind which dictated the sentiment in the text. St. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome for Christ's sake, and it was uncertain what the event of his imprisonment would be; whether he would be restored to liberty, or would be called to seal his faith with his blood. But for either alternative he was prepared. It was his "earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing he should be ashamed; but that with all boldness always, so now also Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death. For" (as he adds) "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Should his life be prolonged, it would be devoted to the service, and would redound to the glory of Christ. Should death await him, incalculable would be the benefits resulting to him from the exchange. Surrounded with such prospects, contemplating on either side objects so inviting, can we be surprised at hearing him declare, that he was "in a straight betwixt two," and that "what he should choose he wot not."

But while the words of the text are illustrative of the happy state of the apostle's mind, the truths contained in them are equally applicable to us. There is not in fact a

single real Christian, of whom it may not be justly said, "To him to live is Christ, and to die is gain:" in which view the passage may be considered as setting before us a short, but comprehensive description of the Life and the Death of the real Christian. To these two points then I shall separately direct your attention.

I. The Life of the real Christian.

To him "to live is Christ." In this general description are included several important particulars which demand explanation.—To the real Christian to live is Christ, because,

1. He lives "through the power" of Christ.

In common with other persons he is indebted for the gift and preservation of *natural* life to Him, "who made the worlds and upholdeth all things by the word of his power."* But it is *spiritual* life, of which we are speaking; and for this life also he is indebted to the same Divine Person. Christ quickened him, when "dead in trespasses and sins," and still maintains that spiritual life, which he first imparted. "Without Christ," i. e. separated from him, the Christian "can do nothing."† It is only from his union with this the true Vine, that he derives health, and vigor, and fruitfulness. In himself he is unable "to think or to do such things as be rightful." It is Christ, who "worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure." In himself he possesses no wisdom, no grace, no goodness: he is empty and destitute; and stands in need of continual support "by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." So subtle and powerful are his spiritual adversaries; so ensnaring is the world; so corrupt and treacherous is his own heart, that to endure for a single moment under his own guidance, and in his own strength, would be a work impossible. Whatever effectual opposition he maintains, is "through Christ, who strengtheneth him." He derives from this source succors, which no enemy can intercept. His "life is hid with Christ in God."‡

2. Hence he lives *by faith* in Christ.

Thus the apostle declares respecting himself. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life, which I now live in the

* Hebrews, i. 2, 3. † John, xv. 5. ‡ Col. iii. 3.

flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”* The Christian, taught by experience to feel his own weakness, and to know where his strength lies, continually looks for help from above. Believing the precious promises of the Gospel, in the daily exercise of prayer he trusts to have those promises fulfilled to himself; and not on extraordinary occasions only, but in the most ordinary cases seeks for direction, and depends on assistance, from Him, who has said, “Ask and ye shall have.” Under the pressure of guilty fears, whither does he flee for relief? To the encouraging assurance, that “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” In the prospect of impending difficulties, whence does he derive consolation? From the animating assurance, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” In an humble, but a believing appropriation of the truths of Scripture, he lives upon the fulness which is in Christ Jesus: he sets the Lord alway before him: by faith beholds him as the Only-begotten of the Father, the Propitiation for his sins, his Advocate and merciful High-Priest; “of God made unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”† And thus “looking unto Jesus,” he goes on his way rejoicing.

3. He lives to the *glory* of Christ.

What, as we have seen, was the case with the apostle? His earnest, and unceasing desire was, that “Christ might be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or by death.” Such in some measure is the desire of all true Christians. “The love of Christ constraineth them no longer to live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and arose again.”‡ Their wish and aim is to exalt the Saviour; to make known his grace: to adorn his doctrine, and to shew forth his praises. In what light do they regard their time, their health, their property, their abilities, their influence? As talents committed to them for their master’s use: talents, which they are required to *occupy* in his service, and to his glory, till he come. By what motive are they enabled to sustain with fortitude the heaviest trials, and oftentimes even to joy in tribulations? By a conviction, that thus the power of Christ shall be made perfect in their weakness; and that “their faith, when tried, shall be found unto the praise and honor and glory” of Jesus Christ, “at his appearing.”

* Gal. ii. 20. † 1 Cor. i. 30. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 15.

4. The Christian lives "after the pattern" of Christ.

He does not propose to himself any inferior object for imitation. If in any respect he deliberately follows the example of men, it is only so far as they are followers of Christ. He knows that the mind, which was in Christ Jesus is that Image, to which all the Disciples of Christ must be conformed. To this Image then he daily seeks for greater conformity ; and thus pursues, though at an immeasurable distance, the footsteps of his Heavenly Master. Was Christ mild, meek, forbearing, humble, condescending, courteous ? Such does the Christian labor to become, to become like-minded to Christ : to suppress in himself all uncharitable and angry tempers, because they had no part in Christ ; to forgive offences, because Christ forgave them : to bear with patience the cross imposed on him, because Christ bore his cross : to be active in promoting the temporal and spiritual welfare of his fellow-creatures, because Christ went about doing good : to submit to all the ordinances of man, because Christ submitted to them : to drink the cup assigned to him by his Heavenly Father, because Christ drank the cup assigned to him.

5. The Christian lives *under the law* of Christ.

All other men live under some other law. The laws of honor, the laws of fashion, the laws of trade, are the rules, by which they regulate their conduct. Even if they pretend to take the law of Christ for their rule, they follow it no further, than as it accords with their worldly interests, or can be made to favor their selfish inclinations. But very different is the case with the true Christian. He takes the law of Christ for his rule ; and he takes it unreservedly, not in part, but in the whole. He desires to please Christ, and testifies his love to him, by "having respect unto all his commandments." He does not allow himself to violate one precept, while he professes to obey another. He does not attempt, by corrupt glosses, to lower the obedience required. He does not say, 'This interpretation of the command is too spiritual,' or 'This application of the rule is too extensive.' He does not endeavor, by urging the weakness of his nature on the one hand, or the severity of the precept on the other, to justify or palliate disobedience. He aims to keep the whole law in thought, in word, and in deed. It is true, that he is deficient, and he knows that he is deficient,

in ten thousand instances. Nay, in no one single instance, does he rise to the level of that standard, to which he is sensible, that he ought to attain. But on this very account he is humbled, ashamed, and grieved. He too often "sees another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members." But he condemns himself even for those deviations, which he allows not; and, were he able, would gladly comply with the injunction, in its most unlimited extent, of being "perfect, even as his Father, which is in heaven, is perfect."

Such are the important particulars included in the general description under review. Such is the Life of the real Christian. He lives through the power of Christ, by faith in Christ, to the glory of Christ, after the pattern of Christ, under the law of Christ. Thus "to him to live is Christ."

We proceed to the other point proposed :

II. The Death of the real Christian.

"To him to die is gain." The general proposition contained in these words stands in need of little confirmation. That death will prove a gain to the real Christian is a conclusion too obvious to be denied or questioned. Even those, who refuse to share in his pious labors on earth, cannot, on many occasions, conceal their desire of participating in the portion reserved for him in heaven; and thus are constrained, however reluctantly, to testify their conviction of the truth of the apostle's assertion. But the particulars comprised in this general proposition may admit, as in the former head, of a more detailed explanation. It may be both expedient and important to specify in what respects death will prove a gain to the real Christian. Such a specification, while it unfolds the nature of his gain, will unquestionably demonstrate its reality.

In entering on this discussion, I feel it necessary to notice, in order to expose an error, which, in reference to the point before us, may sometimes be entertained. It may be supposed, because the Christian is said to be a gainer by death, that he is therefore a loser in life; and that one considerable accession to his happiness in heaven will consist in a deliverance from that peculiar degree of unhappiness which he endures on earth. But such a supposition is false. The real Christian loses nothing by his religion in this life;

neither does he endure any peculiar degree of unhappiness on earth. On the contrary, it may be safely and confidently affirmed, that the very reverse of this supposition is the truth. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, *as well as* of that which is to come."* The Christian indeed places not his happiness in the same objects in which other men place theirs. Does it therefore follow, that he is unhappy? He parts indeed with many things, which ungodly and worldly men admire and value. Does it therefore follow, that he has no compensation? No man ever encountered more for Christ's sake than Paul himself. Was Paul a loser by his religion? Was Paul unhappy? He tells us, that "what things were gain to him he counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and that he counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord :†" while the text, as we have seen, exhibits to us an illustration of the happy state of the apostle's mind under the heaviest trials. The fact is this: the true Christian enjoys a source of inward peace and consolation, of which other persons have neither knowledge nor conception. He possesses a secret joy, with which a stranger intermeddleth not; a joy, which the world can neither give nor take away. His affections are set on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. His conversation is in heaven, from whence also he looketh for the Saviour. In the testimony of an approving conscience he anticipates a blessed immortality, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God.

Hence we may discover the particulars comprised in the general proposition under review. Hence we may discern, in what respects death, in a pre-eminent degree, becomes the Christian's gain. To him "to die is gain," because death realizes to him his largest expectations; puts him in complete possession of those blessings, to which in prospect he has long looked forward; turns his faith into vision, his hope into enjoyment; and admits him to the full and unrestrained participation of those rivers of pleasure, of which in this life he has experienced only occasional and limited supplies.

So long as he has been in the flesh, what a burden, what an obstacle, what a torment has he found that body of sin, which dwelleth in him! How often has it tended to deaden

* 1 Tim. iv. 8. † Phil. ii. 7, 8.

and distract his devotions, and to interrupt his communion with God ! How many polluting images has it suggested to his mind ! How many improper tempers has it excited in his bosom ! But from this enemy he is now freed for ever. Death has dissolved the union betwixt his soul and sin. No longer he groans being burdened. No longer carnal affections unfit him for spiritual exercises. Perfectly conformed to the image of his Lord, he is now prepared for beginning his endless service of love and praise.

While he was on earth, his unavoidable intercourse with ungodly men was the source of much uneasiness. How often was he offended with their impious discourse ! How often was he grieved at the hardness of their heart ! While constrained to dwell among them that were enemies to peace, how frequently did he long for the wings of a dove, that he might flee away and be at rest ! But his wish is now obtained. Death has removed him to a place of bliss, where nothing unclean shall enter, and nothing that offends. He is "come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God; the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and (above all) to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."* Yes. He is now with Jesus, and beholds his glory. He dwells in the presence of Him, whom his soul loveth. He has entered into the joy of his Lord. What was the glorious object, which the apostle had in view, when he exclaimed, "To me to die is gain?" It was, that when he departed, he should be with Christ. This is gain indeed. This is the consummation of the Christian's happiness, "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord;" no longer to "see through a glass darkly, but face to face;" no longer to "know in part, but to know even as himself is known; to see Jesus as he is;" to fall down before the Lamb, and to ascribe to him blessing, and honor, and glory, and power for ever and ever.

Such is the Death of the real Christian. To him "to die is gain." But can this assertion with truth be made of any other but of him ? Can it be truly said of the profane and the worldly man, of the unbeliever, and the hy-

* Hebrews, xii. 22, 23, 24.

pocrite, that to them "to die is gain?" Alas! death is to them the heaviest loss: the conclusion of all their short-lived pleasures; the utter extinction of every hope. Whatever joys they have felt on earth now cease for ever; and an everlasting night of misery succeeds. Could it be truly said of that ungodly man, "who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, *that to him to die was gain?*" Alas! He died and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." Would death have been a gain even to the wretched beggar, Lazarus himself; would he have been carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, had he not been a partaker of Abraham's faith, and with the patriarch "had seen the day of Christ, and had rejoiced?" No. Far better would it have been for him to have lain for ages at the rich man's gate, covered with sores, and enduring the utmost extremity of want and pain, than to have died without possessing an interest in Christ. For *thus to die* would have been only to exchange temporal and tolerable sufferings for those, which are eternal and intolerable. This, my brethren, is a point which I would forcibly urge on your attention. When we see a fellow mortal stretched on the bed of sickness, writhing in agony, and struggling with an incurable disease, how very common is it to express a hope that he may be soon *released*, that death may speedily terminate his misery. The hope itself is charitable, and results from an unwillingness to witness sufferings to which we are unable to administer relief. But let us not deceive ourselves with vain and unmeaning words. If the man be not a real Christian, death will be no *release* to him. Death, far from terminating his misery, will dreadfully increase it. The body indeed by dissolution will be reduced to a senseless state, and for a season will lie mouldering in the dust, exempt from pain. But the soul will be passed into a place of unutterable anguish, "reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day." And is this a *release*? Is this a *gain*? It is true, that "the Spirit saith, Blessed are the dead;" but mark the limitation annexed, "who die in the Lord." They only who die in the Lord are blessed: for they only have an interest in the atoning blood of Christ, without which there is no remission. "The sting of death is sin." But the sins of the real Christian are forgiven:

for, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." They die in peace with God : therefore are they blessed. But all others die under the curse and sentence of unpardoned sin. "The wrath of God abideth on them." And how can they be blessed ?

God grant, that these awful truths may be accompanied with suitable impressions ! My brethren, you must die. Young and old, high and low, rich and poor, you must one day die. Let the period be removed to the greatest possible distance, yet your last hour will at length arrive ; that solemn hour, when you will be called to leave this world for ever ; to bid a long and last farewell to every thing on earth ; to enter on an unseen and untried state. When this momentous change shall come, what would you wish to find it ! Your best friend, or your worst enemy ? Your greatest gain, or your heaviest loss ? A blessing, or a curse ? cannot but anticipate your answer. I know that every heart must be ready to exclaim, " May death to me be gain ?" And most cordially and earnestly do I hope and pray, that you may find it such ; a gain vast and incalculable, beyond your utmost thoughts ! But remember, that you never can find death a gain, unless death finds you a real Christian. It never can be gain to you to die, unless to you " to live is Christ." These are two things inseparably united. Think not that you can part them. Build not on so vain a hope. Think not that it is enough to be saying within yourself, " May I die the death of the righteous ?" The question is, Are you living the life of the righteous ? Are you living through the power of Christ, by faith in Christ, to the glory of Christ, after the pattern of Christ, under the law of Christ ? Is it your desire thus to live ? Is it your prayer thus to live ? And while you desire and pray, are you diligently using all the appointed means, by which the spiritual life is nourished and sustained ?

God forbid ! that in stating these solemn truths, I should discourage any humble Christian, or in a single instance " make the heart of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad !" But I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy ; and I would have you jealous over yourselves. I would not have you conclude that all is safe, unless that all be safe, I would spare you the dreadful disappointment of discovering, when the discovery will be too late, that you

have been self-deceived. Think what unspeakable anguish will ensue, when death, which in expectation you have fondly regarded as a gain, shall on trial prove to be a loss, which you never can repair ! And O, a loss how great ! The loss of heaven ; the loss of hope ; the loss of your immortal soul ! Spare yourselves this misery. Let Christ be now your life. Open your hearts to Him ; that henceforth He may dwell within you. Seek of Him grace, that, redeemed from your vain conversation, you may become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Here must the work of reformation begin. Here must the foundation of the spiritual edifice be laid ; in a deep, an abiding renovation of the inner man by the Spirit of God. "That which is born of the Spirit," and that only, "is Spirit." By nature you are carnal, and born in sin. "Marvel not that ye must be born again." A new life must commence in a new birth. Never can Christ be your life, till from him you have received a new principle of spiritual life. Pray then for this inestimable gift. Continue instant in prayer for it : till being "transformed by the renewing of your mind ye may prove," experimentally know, "what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God."

Is Christ already your life ? See that you live more diligently and closely to him. Let his power be more fully manifested in your life. Live more humbly and simply dependent on his grace and promises. Live more devoted to his glory. Live more conformed to his image. Live more obedient to his word. Thus living, you may feel assured, that death, whenever it arrives, shall be your gain. In life you shall experience that peace of mind, which passeth all understanding : but at death you shall be completely blessed. You shall be transported from this vale of misery and tears to those regions of unfading bliss, where "God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes : and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.—The sun shall no more be thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy Glory.

SERMON XLI.

The Duty of Surrendering Ourselves to God explained and Enforced.

ROMANS, xii. 1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

THE ultimate object of Revelation, considered with respect to man, is to fit him for eternal happiness, by reclaiming him to the knowledge and practice of his duty, as a moral creature of God. To promote this object is the grand tendency of all the doctrines of the Gospel. With one voice they not only proclaim the necessity of holiness ; but urge us by the most constraining motives to “ yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

It is this duty, which St. Paul in the text so affectionately presses on the Romans, as a conclusion obviously, and even necessarily, resulting from the doctrines, which he had stated and illustrated in the preceding part of his Epistle. He describes that cordial surrender of themselves to the divine service and glory, which it is his aim to recommend and enforce, in language borrowed from the circumstances of the ceremonial law. In allusion to the sacrifices, in which the bodies of the animals were solemnly presented and devoted to God, he exhorts his readers to “ present their bodies a sacrifice holy unto God.” In contradistinction however to these sacrifices, in which the animals, being designed as a typical atonement for sin, were slain, and their dead bodies were burnt upon the altar, the apostle adds, But present your bodies a *living* sacrifice holy unto God. Devote your lives to God, Devote your bodies to him ; and not your bodies only, but your souls also. The devotion of the body, unaccompanied with that of the soul, will be but a formal, lifeless service ; a dead, and not a living sacrifice.

Devote to him the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, to be set apart for his use, to be employed to his glory. This will be a sacrifice acceptable to him : a sacrifice, which reason requires, and which the infinite mercies of God compel you to offer.

Such is the duty, which the apostle here prescribes. Such are the motives, by which he enforces the practice of it. But this duty is equally incumbent, these motives are equally binding on all Christians. On these two points therefore I shall proceed separately to enlarge.

I. For the clearer explanation of the duty under review, I shall point out some of the leading particulars in which it consists.

II. I shall endeavor to shew the constraining efficacy of those motives by which this duty is enforced in the text.

I. One leading particular in the general duty under review consists in the "Mortification of sin."

It is utterly impossible that there can be any real devotedness to God, where sin reigns in the mortal body, and is habitually obeyed in any of the lusts thereof. God and sin are directly opposed to each other. Both therefore cannot retain dominion in the same heart. The soul, if it serve sin, cannot be devoted to God. When the apostle then exhorts us to present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy unto God, he directs us in other words to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts—to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit—to mortify our members, which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Do you ask more particularly, what these directions require? They require, that, according to the spirit of the apostle's injunction, you must not allowedly indulge any one passion, any one practice, any one temper, which is contrary to the holy law of God; that you must deny yourself; and watch and fight against every sin, especially that sin which most easily besets you. Many hypocrites have been detected by their obstinate adherence to their favorite sin. Herod refused to divorce Herodias: and Saul, while he destroyed the rest of the Amalakites, spared Agag the king. But the duty before us admits of no reservations. It bids you spare no sin, though it be near and dear to you as your right-hand, or your right-eye. It directs you, as the bodice,

of the sacrifices were laid open for the inspection of the priests, to lay open your heart for the inspection of God, who requireth truth in the inward parts ; and without any deceit or guile to shew him, that though you have indeed much evil remaining in you, for which you daily need to implore his forgiveness, yet you do not wilfully retain iniquity within : that it is your sincere desire and earnest endeavor to purify yourself even as he is pure ; and that in fact, “denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, you are living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

A second branch of the duty in question consists in a “Consecration of all our talents to God.”

According to the full meaning of the apostle’s exhortation, it is not sufficient to desist from “yielding our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin ;” we must also “yield them as instruments of righteousness unto God.” The very idea of presenting ourselves a living sacrifice holy unto God, involves the devotion of all the powers of body and soul to be actively engaged in his service. So that the injunction in the text comprises the substance of those precepts delivered by the same apostle on other occasions ; “Glorify God in your body and in your spirit.”—“Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”* In other words, we are directed, in all our thoughts, our words, and our actions, to maintain a pre-eminent regard to the divine presence, authority, and honor : to consider ourselves as stewards, who possess nothing of our own, and who are required to employ every talent, whether natural or acquired, in the work and for the interests of Him, who is the original Source, and the sole Proprietor of all our endowments. Such views and sentiments indeed are highly repugnant to the proud and selfish feelings of our natural heart : but the man, who presents himself a living sacrifice holy unto God, will seriously resolve and studiously labor, on all occasions, to act in the spirit of these directions. What will be his object in the conduct of his worldly concerns ? Will he aim to prosper in his commercial occupation, or to rise to eminence in his professional engagements, merely for the sake of the worldly advantages annexed to commercial prosperity, or to professional distinction ? No : but because diligence in his proper calling is one part of the work assigned

* 1 Cor. vi. 20. x. 13.

to him by his heavenly Master ; and because success in it will enlarge his sphere of usefulness, and will qualify him for the discharge of more extensive and important services. Nor will the principles, on which he manages his worldly concerns, be those by which the men of the world, in similar circumstances, are actuated. He will not regulate his conduct by the corrupt maxims and customs of the world, but by the pure precepts of the divine law. He will not feel himself justified in adopting practices, which the word of God condemns, however they may be sanctioned by the common usage of his fellow-creatures. Does his situation in society invest him with any authority and influence over others ? Is he a parent ? Is he a master of a family ? He will carefully improve the means, thus placed within his power, in promoting true religion, in inculcating the knowledge and fear of God. Is he rich ? He will employ his riches, not in self-gratification, not " in making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof ; but in such a manner as he believes to be most agreeable to the will, and most conducive to the glory of Him, who has committed them to his trust. Is he poor ? He will faithfully occupy with his single talent. By a cheerful discharge of his duty, in that state of life to which Providence has assigned him ; by a patient continuance in well-doing ; by honesty in his dealings ; by fidelity to his employers ; by his meek, his useful, and inoffensive conduct, he will endeavor to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour, and thus, by exhibiting in his whole life and conversation the blessed fruits of righteousness, to recommend religion to others, to silence objectors, and to glorify God.

A third particular of the general duty under review consists in a " Resignation to the Divine Will."

To Devote ourselves to God, evidently implies our readiness not only to *do* whatever work he may require us to perform, but also to *bear* whatever evil he may see fit to lay upon us. We cannot be truly said to present ourselves a living sacrifice holy unto God, unless we are prepared to endure such trials and afflictions as his infinite wisdom may appoint. To make an exception in this respect, to express ourselves willing to *serve* God while we refuse to suffer according to his will, would utterly destroy the notion of an hearty surrender to him. The dedication of ourselves

would not be unreserved, and therefore not such a dedication as is here enjoined. The apostle indeed, in his own example, displays the clearest proof and most apposite illustration of his meaning. There is no feature in his character more striking than that complete resignation to the Divine Will, which he here inculcates. Let Christ be magnified in his body; and whether it were by his life or by his death, was to him a circumstance equally indifferent: while in the prospect of approaching martyrdom we find him depicting the submissive state of his mind in terms of a similar allusion with those of the text: "I am now ready to be offered."* This passive obedience to the will of God is indeed a part of our duty but little understood in comparison with its more active branches. Persons, who have given very unequivocal marks of their piety, sometimes betray in this respect their ignorance of the nature and the extent of that surrender of themselves to God, which they profess to have made. When disabled by sickness, or precluded by age, from pursuing their former occupations, and from serving God after their accustomed manner, how apt are they to complain that they are now deprived of every opportunity of improving their talents, and possess no further means of glorifying God upon earth. But what foundation for such a complaint exists? Are not they, are not all persons visited with affliction, then called upon to exercise one of the most difficult, one of the most important branches of their duty—resignation to the Divine Will? Are they not then called upon to prove, that they have indeed "presented themselves a living sacrifice holy unto God," by meekly submitting to his chastisements, by acquiescing without murmuring in his dispensations, by waiting without impatience his time and mode of deliverance? Are they not then called upon to glorify God by manifesting the efficacy of those superior aids, with which religion, in seasons of suffering, sustains and fortifies her followers? Such is the instructive example held out to us by those illustrious characters of old, whose pious expressions of resignation, under the heaviest calamities, obviously display the nature of this particular branch of the general duty under discussion. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.—Good is the word of the Lord,

* 2 Tim. iv. 6.

which thou hast spoken.—The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away : Blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

Such are some of the leading particulars, in which the duty enjoined by the apostle consists.

II. I shall endeavor to shew the constraining efficacy of those motives, by which this duty is enforced in the text.

Advert first to the *Reasonableness* of the duty prescribed. Reason is that noble faculty, which distinguishes man from the brute creation, and constitutes one of the great excellencies of his nature. Through the corruption indeed entailed on us by the fall, we often make a very improper use of our reason, and apply it to subjects, for which it was never intended, and to which it is wholly incompetent. But this abuse of the gift does not detract from its real value or importance. God uniformly deals with us as with reasonable creatures. He requires of us no services, but such as reason, rightly exercised, approves. He graciously condescends himself to reason with us ; and frequently in direct terms appeals to our reason to decide on the equity of his demands. In the same spirit, St. Paul urges us to “ present our bodies a living sacrifice holy unto God,” on the ground that it is “ our reasonable service.” It is a duty against which no reasonable objection can be made : nay, a duty which our own unprejudiced judgment cannot but allow to be most just and reasonable. Whether God’s right, or our own interest be considered, the argument will be equally conclusive.

Wherever there exists a clear title to possession, there, it is universally admitted, exists also a clear title to the service of the thing possessed. Whatever is manifestly our own, whether by purchase, by inheritance, or by invention, we claim a right to appropriate to our own use. No principle can be plainer than this. Nor is there any on which men more uniformly act. But what title to possession can be so clear, as that which creation confers on God ? He made our souls and bodies. Are they not then His property ? Does He not possess the strongest right to their services ? You contend, and justly, that you have an undisputed claim to the labor of the beast, which you have bought ; to the produce of the land which you occupy. Surely God has an equally undisputed claim to the services of those creatures, whom he

* 1 Samuel, iii. 18. Isaiah, xxxix. 8. Job, i. 21.

has made. When he says, "Devote your souls and bodies to my use and glory," He requires us to devote to him those souls and bodies, which on undeniable evidence are his own. —But God not only at first created, he continues daily to support us. This circumstance, if possible, strengthens his claim to your obedience. You feed and clothe your servant, and deem yourself on this account entitled to his service. You would feel that he greatly wronged you, if, while maintained at your expence, he should neglect your business and should employ his time and his talents in the service of another master. Are not then your time and your talents justly due to Him, who provides you not only with food and raiment, but with life and breath, and with all things? Is it not an act of the most palpable injustice to withhold your services from God, and to consume in selfish gratifications those gifts, which he has entrusted to you for his own peculiar use? Viewed in this light, the *Reasonableness* of the duty is fully evident.

Try it next on the other ground. See whether in respect to your own interest the service enjoined be not a *reasonable* service. I will assume it as a principle, which cannot be controverted, that to seek our own happiness is highly reasonable. This, like the former, is a principle on which men uniformly act. Though they may frequently entertain very erroneous notions of happiness, and may seek it by very mistaken means; yet still for a person deliberately to choose and follow any object, the pursuit of which must necessarily terminate in his misery and destruction, would be deemed by all an unequivocal mark of folly. What then does the duty enjoined in the text imply? It implies that you renounce and forsake the ways of sin, which must finally involve you in shame and ruin, and that you choose and follow the ways of God, which must eventually conduct you to happiness and glory. Is it not then a *reasonable* service? Is not the surrender of your soul and body to the service of God a step the most agreeable to the soundest exercise of *reason*? Whenever a miserable fellow-creature lays violent hands on his own life, we instantly pronounce such an act of desperation to be a proof of madness. Who then is so mad as the servant of sin? He is a self-destroyer in the worst sense of the word. He is daily murdering his own soul. What folly, what madness is this! What an unreasonable

service is the service of sin ! To be serving a master, whose wages is death ! To be choosing a path, whose end is destruction ! To be incurring endless, hopeless misery, remorse and shame, for the sake of a momentary indulgence ! Surely, my brethren, such a service is most unreasonable. But remember then, that exactly in proportion to the folly of sin is the wisdom of holiness : that exactly in proportion to the unreasonableness of serving the devil, the world, and the flesh, is the reasonableness of "presenting yourselves a living sacrifice holy unto God."

But it is not only on the reasonableness of the duty, that the apostle enforces his exhortation in the text. The surrender of yourselves to God will be a "sacrifice acceptable unto him." To attempt to offer any atonement for sin would be highly offensive to God. Such a sacrifice he would reject with abhorrence : because it would virtually imply a denial of the merits and sufficiency of that one sacrifice, which he himself has provided for sin. Christ has for ever taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Having by his sufferings and death reconciled and glorified the Divine Perfections. He has made by that one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Here then lies the sinners only way to pardon and favor : while every pretension to the Divine Acceptance on the ground of any thing, which he himself can do, or can offer, is abomination in the sight of God. But though you are precluded from making all atonement, is there no offering, which God will favorably receive at your hands ? Yes : when in humble dependence on the sacrifice of Christ alone for the remission of your sins, you testify your faith and love, and pious zeal, by a voluntary, an unreserved surrender of your soul and body to the Divine Glory ; this is a sacrifice acceptable to God : a sacrifice, with which, though you are unworthy to offer any sacrifice, he will be well pleased. This is a service, which, notwithstanding your manifold imperfections in the discharge of it, he will favorably accept. Nay, while the very inclination, which prompts you to the discharge of this service, is the work of His Sovereign Grace, he will liberally recompense you, as if that inclination were entirely your own. My brethren, how powerfully does this motive enforce the duty in question ! When we reflect on the inf-

into Majesty, of God, and on our own utter vileness in His sight; when we reflect on that measure of defilement and impurity, which cleaves to our best actions; well might we be discouraged at the thoughts of offering to Him our services; well might we be filled with apprehensions, whether He would admit of any services from sinners so evil and polluted as ourselves. But, blessed be His goodness, all doubt is now removed. Through Jesus, He will accept our persons and our services; He will overlook our infirmities, and count the will for the deed. Does not this view of His wonderful condescension encourage, does it not constrain you to yield yourselves to Him? Are you not sensibly affected with the honor, the dignity of being devoted to such a Master? Is He so forward to receive your worthless services? Can you be slow at tendering them? Is He graciously saying to you, "Take my yoke upon you?" Can you be proudly saying in reply, 'We will not take it?' Surely you never can be guilty of so great folly and wickedness. Surely, filled with honest indignation at the recollection of a privilege so long neglected, you are ready to exclaim, "O Lord, our God, other Lords besides Thee have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy Name," 'Henceforth we renounce all other masters, and Thee, Thee only, will we serve.'

May these impressions be still further strengthened by the additional motive which remains to be considered! Observe the manner in which St. Paul introduces this exhortation. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God." What mercies does the apostle mean? Those mercies, which it had been his object, throughout the former part of his Epistle, to illustrate and extol, the mercies of Redemption: those mercies, in which God has so richly "abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence."* By *these* mercies I beseech you, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy unto God. To feel the full force of this constraining motive we must reflect on our guilt and misery as sinners, and on the wonderful grace displayed in our Redemption; we must reflect on the dreadful and degraded state to which sin has reduced us, and on the unspeakable love of Christ in dying for our souls. Contemplate this amazing mystery; the Eternal son of the Most High, veil-

* Ephes. i. 8.

ing His glory beneath an human form, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and humbling himself unto Death, even the Death of the Cross. Consider the cause of this his astonishing humiliation : the object for which he submitted to this vast indignity—that he might make satisfaction to the Divine Justice for our iniquities, and deliver us wretched, worthless sinners from the bitter pains of eternal Death. Yes : for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, that he might give his life a ransom for our souls. “ Though he was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich :” that, through the merits of his voluntary sufferings, we who deserved nothing but wrath and punishment, might be restored to the favor of God, and might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. But, O what manner of love is this ! What return does this rich, this free, this sovereign grace require at our hands ! Are we not constrained to devote our souls to Him who has redeemed them by His own blood from death and misery everlasting ? “ We are not our own, we are bought with a price.” The surrender of all our poor and worthless services is a sacrifice justly due to Him, who gave himself a sacrifice for us. Does God so commend his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ? Where sin hath abounded, does grace so much more abound ? By nature and by practice enemies of God, are we brought nigh by the blood of Jesus ? Is pardon, present, full, everlasting pardon, freely offered to us for all our sins ? And can we hear these glorious truths without emotion ? Is there a spark of gratitude, a spark of generous feeling in our bosoms ? Surely it must kindle into a flame of love, and inspire us with a holy resolution of “ no longer living unto ourselves, but unto Him, who died for us, and rose again.”

Anxiously would I hope, my brethren, that such, at this moment, is the resolution of your minds. Anxiously would I hope, that whatever your sentiments on this subject may hitherto have been, you now perceive and feel, that the solemn dedication of yourselves to God, to live to His glory, to be employed in His service, to be resigned to His will, is a duty which, as men and as Christians, you are bound by the most imperious obligations to discharge. O then, by the mercies of God, by the love of Christ, by the value of

your immortal souls, let me beseech you, that you permit not these favorable impressions to be effaced : that you neglect not, that you defer not, the performance of a duty, so forcibly recommended, so strongly urged. Suffer not your ardor to abate, till you have rendered unto the Lord this reasonable, this acceptable service : till, presenting unto him your souls and bodies to be a lively sacrifice, holy unto God, you have "joined yourselves unto Him in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." Be not discouraged because you feel unworthy to approach Him, and to offer unto Him any sacrifice. Such a feeling of your own unworthiness is the best preparation for coming into His presence, the surest earnest of a favorable acceptance at his hands. If he has disposed your heart in faith and love to render to him this tribute of praise and service, he will not reject the offering because of its little value, or of your imperfection in presenting it. He will not weigh your merits, but will pardon your offences. He will graciously receive your mite, because it is your all ; and for the sake of the motives, which dictate the surrender, will overlook the intrinsic worthlessness of the gift.

SERMON XLII.

Angels rejoicing over the Penitent Sinner.

LUKE, XV. 10.

Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one Sinner that repenteth.

THROUGHOUT the Scriptures the strongest encouragements are given to the returning sinner. The most gracious calls, invitations, and promises, are employed to dispel his fears, and to inspire him with confidence. In illustration of this remark, we may appeal to the chapter from which the text is taken. In three successive parables, differing in some minute particulars, but agreeing in the ge-

moral scope, our blessed Lord proclaims the grace and mercy of the Gospel, and the readiness of God to receive and pardon the penitent offender. In the text, which is the conclusion of one of these interesting parables, the conversion of a Sinner is represented as furnishing renewed matter for joy to the angels, who surround the throne of God. "What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light the candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." To which our Lord adds, as an application explanatory of his meaning, "Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

This representation is calculated to impress us with lively convictions of the efficacy and the importance of repentance. Do those holy spirits, who excel in strength, who dwell in the presence of the Almighty, and do his will, do they "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth?" What a blessed, what a glorious work is repentance! How beneficial to the Sinner! How pleasing to God! May the Lord be with us by his Spirit, while I endeavor to set before you,

I. A description of the Sinner that repenteth.

II. The grounds of that joy, which the angels feel over a person of this description.

I. In describing the Sinner that repenteth, I would begin with observing, that repentance, in the language of Scripture, implies a real change of heart, a conversion of the soul from sin to God. This inward change indeed will be productive of a corresponding reformation in the life: and the amendment of the outward conduct will bear testimony to the amelioration which has taken place within. It may however sometimes happen, that this renewal of the heart occurs in persons, whose naturally pleasing dispositions, amiable manners, exemplary discharge of relative and social offices, and apparent attention to religious duties, have been previously such, as to leave but comparatively little room for any very considerable and striking improvement in their external deportment. The change, however, which they have inwardly experienced, may be no less clear and decisive in the sight of God, who seeth not as man seeth,

Their views, on many important subjects, may be greatly altered. Their motives and principles of action may be very different from those which formerly actuated their conduct. Pride, self-dependence, and an exalted opinion of their own merits and pretensions, which before reigned in the heart with uncontrollable dominion, may have given place to the deepest humiliation and self-abasement, resulting from a discovery of their depravity and guilt, in the eyes of an holy and an heart-searching God : while unreservedly condemning themselves for even those parts of their conduct, which have attracted the applause, perhaps the admiration of the world, they may be earnestly supplicating at the throne of grace an interest in that rich and sovereign mercy, from the very intimation of which they would once have turned away with abhorrence and disdain.

It must be obvious, that wherever such a change, as is here supposed, has taken place, the persons on whom it has been wrought, whatever may be their appearance in the eyes of men, are in the sight of God " new creatures." It must also be equally obvious, that, unaccompanied with such an inward change, no outward reformation can before *Him* be deemed repentance. But to convey to you clearer conceptions on this important subject, I shall briefly delineate the progress of repentance. For let it be remembered, that the nature of repentance continues, in all instances, the same. The circumstances may be infinitely diversified. But under every modification, the recovery of the heart from its state of original alienation, is conducted by the same process, and in all the leading particulars advances by the same steps to that point, which calls forth the joy and congratulation of the heavenly host.

In this progress, the first step is " Inward Illumination. The eyes of the understanding are enlightened." Through the powerful agency of the Holy Ghost the natural film, which obscured the spiritual sight, is removed. The man, who is the subject of the change described, begins to contemplate new objects, which he never before discovered, or learns to contemplate old objects in a new light. The importance of unseen and eternal things, the value of the soul, the majesty and holiness of God, are truths, which now assume a reality and a form hitherto unnoticed. They press upon the mind with a solemnity and an interest unfelt be-

fore. The man awakes like one out of sleep. Roused from the fatal lethargy of sin and unconcern, in the emphatic language of Scripture, he "comes to himself." The light admitted into the sinner's heart may at first indeed be glimmering, and his perception indistinct. Like the blind person miraculously restored to sight, he may "see men as trees walking." He may form very confused and mistaken notions of the objects presented to his view. He may entertain many doubts and mistakes respecting them. But still the work is commenced. The leaven is inserted into the meal; and the whole mass will in due time be leavened.

A second step in the progress described is "Conviction of Sin." Our Lord, when speaking of the gift of the Spirit, declared, that the immediate effect of His coming would be to "convince the world of sin." Such accordingly was the immediate effect produced, when on the day of Pentecost three thousand persons, at the preaching of St. Peter, "were pricked in their hearts." Such then is the effect, which uniformly takes place in the newly enlightened mind. A discovery of sin is indeed a natural consequence of an accession of light. The eyes being opened to discern spiritual objects, and to estimate moral actions, by a standard of which formerly no conceptions were formed, many parts of the conduct are discerned to be sinful, which previously had no such appearance. Much evil is found to lie hid, where none was expected to exist. The ray of heavenly light, poured into the dark recesses of the heart, discloses a floating cloud of corruption and impurity, which before was unperceived. This discovery leads to a conviction of guilt and danger. The soul awakened to a sense of its sin, becomes alarmed for its safety. In different persons indeed this conviction may be attended with different circumstances, and may shew itself in different ways. In some it may be accompanied with more lively impressions than in others. But in *all* it is followed by a real, and an abiding seriousness of mind. The man becomes at least more thoughtful than he was. He can no longer regard his eternal interests with indifference. He begins to examine the grounds of his former hope. He finds them one by one, insufficient to support the fabric raised on them. He is forced, however reluctantly, to abandon them all. He has recourse to new and self-devised expedients for pacifying the voice of con-

science. But his convictions increase, and expose the vanity of his attempts. He forms many good resolutions for the time to come; but in the hour of temptation his resolutions fail, and leave him only deeper plunged in guilt. He earnestly labors to establish his own righteousness; but the more earnestly he labors, the less righteous he discovers himself to be. By a more diligent attendance on religious duties, he tries to heal the wounded spirit; but he tries in vain. A sense of sin still gains upon him: till, baffled at every point, dispirited with repeated disappointments, and uncertain what course to take, he exclaims, if not with the lips, yet in the heart, "What shall I do to be saved?"

The third step by which the sinner advances in his return to God is "a Discovery of the excellence of Christ, and of the suitableness of that method of salvation revealed in the Gospel." Formerly the wisdom of the cross was foolishness to his carnal mind. The very proposition of being saved "by grace through faith," was received with indifference, or excited his disgust. But a sight of his sin and danger has brought down every high thought. He now perceives, that if he is saved at all, he must be saved by sovereign grace. Perplexed and distressed, he is looking around for help. That help the Gospel proposes to administer. Is he sinking under a burden of unpardoned sin? The Gospel offers to him forgiveness of sins. Does he feel himself far off from God? The Gospel discloses a way in which he may be brought nigh. Is he distracted with a sense of innate corruption? The Gospel undertakes to provide an effectual cure. In what light then does he now regard the Gospel? He regards it as a remedy exactly fitted to his wants. The invitations, the promises contained in it, are the very invitations, the very promises of which he stands in need. Were they less free, less rich, less unconditional, they would not suit his case. What are the views, which he now entertains of Christ? Views, far different from those, which he has hitherto entertained. In former times, perhaps, he has not been altogether ignorant of Christ. He has called himself a Christian: has professed faith in the Saviour's name, obedience to his precepts, and even, it may be, zeal in his service. But, compared with his present sentiments, he now perceives that his past knowledge of Christ was barren and unfeeling. In this light can he adopt the striking

declaration of Job, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee."* He now sees Christ in a way, in which he never saw him before, to be the "one Thing needful; the Pearl of great Price;" the only Propitiation for sin; the only Physician, which can heal the wounded spirit; "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." With an eagerness, to which he was once a stranger, he listens to a recital of the Saviour's power, condescension, grace, sufficiency: till, trembling with alternate fear and hope, he ardently exclaims, 'O that I might win Christ and be found in Him!'

Advert to the concluding step in the progress under review. To this discovery of the excellence of Christ, and of the suitableness of that method of salvation revealed in the Gospel, succeeds "an earnest Application for a personal interest in the promised blessings." What is the sinner's language in this last stage of his repentance? 'Does Jesus receive and pardon all who come unto him? Peradventure he will receive and pardon me. I will arise and go to him. I will acknowledge my sins; implore his forgiveness; and cast myself upon his sovereign mercy.' Many obstacles concur to divert the sinner from his purpose. The world with its formidable artillery assaults and harasses him. A sense of guilt and a dread of rejection at times weigh down his soul. The powers of darkness unite to oppose his progress. But none of these things can prevail against him. They only drive him more closely to the Bible and to prayer. Behold him retired within his secret chamber, like Ephraim "bemoaning himself, ashamed, yea, even confounded, because he bears the reproach of his youth,"† with bended knees and downcast eyes bemoaning his transgressions, confessing their guilt with every aggravated circumstance, and pleading nothing in his behalf, but the blood of Jesus and the promises of the Gospel. Behold him thus engaged, and see, my brethren, "the sinner that repenteth." Behold a sight the most blessed and glorious which this world can show: a sight, which however overlooked or despised by men, fills heaven with shouts of joy and songs of praise.

II. I proceed to set before you the grounds of that joy, which the angels feel over a person of this description.

* Job, xlii. 5.

† Jeremiah, xxxii. 18, 19.

When these blessed spirits first saw the incarnate Saviour, they sang "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards man." A prospect of the mercy vouchsafed to man, and of the consequent accession to the glory of God, excited in their bosoms the most rapturous joy. The same motives, love to man, and zeal for the divine glory, still lead them to "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth."

A Penitent Sinner is a soul saved. Faint, at present, and very defective are our conceptions of the madness and misery of a state of sin. Some scanty glimpses indeed of these things we may catch; whenever the spirit of God brings home the truths of Scripture to our heart. Yet still in this respect, as in every other, we now see only through a glass darkly. But the angels perceive distinctly the evil of sin. They know the blessedness of being like God, of dwelling in his presence, of doing his will. They have seen the dreadful consequences of sin displayed in their brethren, who kept not their first estate. They know the infinite perfections of that God, against whom sin is committed. They comprehend those eternal torments, which are prepared for his obstinate and incorrigible enemies. What then is the spectacle, which "a sinner that repenteth" exhibits to their eyes? They behold an immortal soul delivered from the most deplorable wretchedness, and translated into a state inconceivably glorious and happy. They contemplate a creature of God undergoing the most blessed and important change. They see one, whom sin had enslaved, defaced, ruined; breaking its potent chains, recovering the lost image of his Maker, emerging from darkness and death into light and life. Can they view this interesting sight without emotion? Can they view a soul thus saved, and not be filled with joy? Men indeed too often rapine at each other's happiness: for envy is deeply rooted in their evil hearts. But angels are incapable of experiencing this baneful passion. Their pure and benevolent natures cannot but feel delight at the extension of happiness. Is one sinner penitent? He is a brand plucked out of the fire. He is a Being rescued from the jaws of everlasting death. He is another soul added to the number of those, who shall be blessed for evermore. Hence there is joy on his account in the presence of the angels of God.

But the repentance of a sinner is not only an increase of human felicity, it is an accession also to the Divine Glory. Every Penitent Sinner is not only a soul saved : but a soul saved through the love of the Father, the merits of the Son, and the agency of the Holy Ghost. Every Penitent Sinner is a fresh instance of the riches of Divine Grace, of the efficacy of Christ's blood and intercession, of the converting power of the Spirit. The Divine Perfections no where appear so glorious as in the salvation of man. There the union of infinite mercy, justice, holiness and truth, illustriously appears. It was Almighty wisdom only, that could have devised a plan, in which God can be Just and yet the Justifier of the sinner. Every sinner then, that repenteth, shews forth afresh the wisdom of this plan, and reflects new lustre on the Glory of the God-head. Hence angels rejoice over him. They rejoice over him as calling forth their renewed admiration of the Divine Perfections. They rejoice over him as another subject added to the Redeemer's kingdom ; another jewel inserted in his crown : another soul, who, rescued by his power and washed in his blood, shall sing his praises and share his glory for evermore.

What are the reflections, which this subject suggests ? If repentance be so important and glorious a work : with what importunity should we seek of God this gift for ourselves, with what earnestness should we desire and labor to bring others to repentance ! If angels rejoice over the Penitent Sinner, what joy should be felt by us over every sinner that repenteth ! But is such, in this respect, the conduct, are such the feelings of men ? Far from seeking repentance with an anxiety suited to its importance, they often despise and ridicule the very idea of a total and abiding change within. Far from earnestly laboring to bring a fellow-sinner to repentance, they often exert their ingenuity and influence for the express purpose of hardening him in iniquity. Far from rejoicing over a sinner that repenteth, they frequently load him with reproaches, and brand him as the object of contempt and scorn : or, like the Pharisees of old, quarrel with the riches of Divine Grace, and declaim against the Gospel for offering mercy to one, whom, compared with themselves, they deem undeserving any favor. But if this representation be just (and we need only appeal to experience for the confirmation of it,) what a striking proof is

thus afforded of the corruption of the human heart, and of its natural enmity to God and holiness ! How unlike are men to angels ! How fallen and depraved ! How destitute of those heavenly dispositions, which characterise the blessed spirits above, and lead them to rejoice in every thing, which increases human happiness and the Divine Glory ! But be it remembered, my brethren, that without possessing similar dispositions you can never be made meet for partaking the inheritance of the saints in light, for enjoying heaven and the society of angels. So long as you retain your carnal hearts, the mansions of unfading bliss themselves would to you become the regions of disgust and misery. Seek then of God that new heart, which he has promised to give to them that ask for it. Pray that you may repent : that, considering your ways and convinced of your sins, you may return through the blood of Jesus, and the supply of his Spirit, to your heavenly Father. Never will you learn cordially to rejoice “over a sinner that repenteth,” till by your own repentance you have yourselves occasioned joy in the presence of the angels of God.

If it be possible that you can require additional motives to repentance, the text, as it has been unfolded, will amply furnish them. Contemplate the stupendous scene, which has been opened to your view. Behold the cloud of witnesses, with which you are encompassed. Behold the unnumbered millions of immortal spirits waiting in joyful expectation your return to duty, to God, to happiness. Shall they wait in vain ? Shall they be prepared to raise their angelic voices, and to strike their golden harps in celebration of your deliverance, from the wretched captivity of sin : and will you madly cleave to sin ; prefer its dreadful bondage, and in obstinate impenitence rush upon destruction ? Shall Satan and his legions feel on your account a malignant pleasure, and insultingly triumph in your ruin ; while angels might be rejoicing over you ? Shall that soul which might be furnishing fresh matter for praise and joy throughout the realms of light, continue immersed in fleshly lusts, in sensual gratifications, in worldly pleasures and pursuits, regardless of the high and glorious privileges, to which it is invited ? God forbid, my brethren, that any of you should be so sunk, so lost ! May that blessed Spirit, who only can “work in

us to will and to do of his good pleasure," work in you true repentance unto life ! By the effectual operations of his grace, may he enlighten your darkness, break the fetters with which you are bound, and constrain you henceforth "no longer to live unto yourselves, but unto Him, who died for you and rose again !"

But lastly, and chiefly, let me apply the subject for consolation to those who stand most in need of consolation. Is there present one sinner that repenteth ? He, in a pre-eminent degree, is deeply interested in the whole tenor of this discourse. Perhaps you have been awakened from a careless, and, as you now perceive, a sinful course. You are alarmed for your soul. You are greatly cast down at the number and the magnitude of your sins. But you have heard of Jesus, and of Salvation through His name ; and you are earnestly desirous of fleeing to Him for refuge, and of being saved by His power and grace. This is your only hope. But many doubts and fears conspire to discourage you. You are seeking Christ in every appointed way, in prayer, in his word, and in his ordinances. But you are apprehensive that he will not receive you. After all your endeavors, you experience no sensible comfort in your soul. The adversary accuses ; your own conscience condemns ; the world, far from pitying your state, so far as it knows your sufferings, derides them. You are ready to sink under the burden. But be of good cheer. Your prayers, your sighs, your tears, are not unnoticed. Jesus sees them all ; and, while you are disposed to conclude yourself forgotten, is calling on the ten thousand times ten thousand angels, which surround his throne, to "rejoice with him, for he has found his sheep which was lost." Yes : in those very moments, when you are tempted to despair of mercy, heaven rings with peals of joy and gratitude on your account. Angels rejoice over you. The blessed Jesus himself rejoices over you. He sees in you the "travail of his soul and is satisfied : " and though for a season he may hide his countenance from you ; yet in due time the Day-Star shall arise in your heart ; and you shall walk in the light of Him, whom your soul loveth. Then shall your sorrow be turned into joy. Then shall you rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

SERMON XLIII.

Consolation to the Afflicted.

ISAIAH, I. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant ; that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

WHILE the Holy Scriptures denounce vengeance on every obstinate and impenitent sinner, they abound with the richest consolations to persons of an opposite character. It appears indeed to be one constant and leading object of the sacred writers not to "make the heart of the righteous sad," but to keep alive in them a cheering recollection of the important truth, that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations," as well as to "reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished." Hence it generally occurs, that in those passages, where divine wrath is proclaimed against incorrigible transgressors, some gracious promise, some encouraging exhortation is introduced for the comfort and support of the true servants of God.

The text affords an illustration of this remark. In the preceding verses Isaiah had been foretelling the awful judgments which God would assuredly inflict upon the Jews for their rejection, first of his prophets, and afterwards of his Son. "Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment ; the moth shall eat them up." But was the whole nation to be indiscriminately involved in destruction ? No. There was a remnant, there always would be a remnant, distinguished by their piety and zeal : and to such persons the predicted vengeance did not attach. Though for a season they might appear to be involved in the general ruin, yet let them not be cast down, neither let them be afraid. The Lord "with the temptation would make a way of escape, that they might be able to bear it." Let this assurance comfort their hearts, and

sustain their drooping spirits. Such is the purport of the consolatory address in the text : " Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

But this consolatory address is not to be confined to the Jews, or to the times of Isaiah or of Christ. It is equally applicable to all nations and ages. The Consolation to be derived from it belongs to every person, whose case accords with that described in the text. Every person among us, who " feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant," may with confidence be exhorted under every affliction to " trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay upon his God." In making this extended use of the passage, I shall proceed,

I. To give a general statement of the case described, and of the Consolation provided for it.

II. To lead those, who are concerned, to make a particular application of the subject to themselves.

I. The case described is one which possesses the strongest claim to commiseration and relief. It is the case of piety under affliction, and that affliction not of an ordinary kind and measure, but peculiar both in its nature and degree.—" Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant ?" These words designate the piety of the person, whose case is described. He " feareth the Lord." He lives under a conviction deeply impressed, and permanently operating on his soul, of the presence, the majesty, and the holiness of the Almighty. He " obeyeth the voice of his servant." Under whatever dispensation of the covenant of grace the pious man may have his lot assigned ; whether God speaks unto him by Moses and the prophets, or by Christ and his apostles ; he listens with reverence, and strives to render " the obedience of faith." It is his desire to be holy as God is holy, and to " walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Such is genuine piety. But is even such piety exempt from suffering on earth ? The text implies, experience proves, the contrary. Though " Godliness has promise of the life that now is," as well as " of that which is to come," yet facts demonstrate, that this promise includes not an exemption from present anxiety and trouble. The case under review represents, as has been already stated, exem-

plary piety united with singular affliction. 'The person addressed is described, while fearing the Lord, and obeying the voice of his servant, as at the same time "walking in darkness, and seeing no light." These expressions are clearly figurative ; but there can be no difficulty in ascertaining their appropriate meaning. They evidently denote a state of perplexity and distress, in which no prospect of deliverance presents itself. And it is this latter circumstance which constitutes the peculiarity of the case. Where a probability exists, that at the arrival of some limited period, and by the application of some specific means, though that period be even distant, and those means in the application be painful, the termination of a heavy calamity will be accomplished : such a probability greatly diminishes the pressure of the burden, and cheers the spirit of the sufferer. But to be heavy laden, and at the same time to discover no probable time or mode in which relief will be administered ; to be so entangled and hemmed in on every side, as that no avenue of escape appears ; to be so overwhelmed with gloom and darkness, as that not one ray of light illumines the dreary path ; surely this is a state which must be accounted singularly afflicting, and which stands most eminently in need of Consolation. Such however is the state of the person represented in the text. Nor let the representation be deemed exaggerated. Let us not suppose, that such an union of distinguished piety with peculiar suffering is a case which only rarely occurs. Many in all ages have been the Lord's people, who, notwithstanding their faithful and conscientious adherence to his service, have at times been constrained to "walk in darkness, and to see no light." Are instances required ? Look at Job, that illustriously pious character, to whom the Lord himself bore testimony, that "there was none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one who feared God, and eschewed evil." See how strikingly his case corresponded with that described. What is the language in which he himself depicts it ? "Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard. I cry aloud, but there is no judgment. He hath fenced up my way, that I cannot pass ; and he hath set darkness in

my paths."⁴ Look at David, the man after God's own heart. Does he not complain of his dark and deserted state? "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."⁵ Look at the inspired but afflicted Heman. Did not he walk in darkness, and see no light? "My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?"⁶ Look at that pious mourner, who in these plaintive strains bewails his disconsolate condition. "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, and not into light. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travel. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about that I cannot get forth: he hath made my chain heavy. Also, when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, and hath made my paths crooked."⁷ Look at Christ himself. "Was any sorrow like unto his sorrow?" In the garden of Gethsemane his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And what a total suspension of light and comfort he endured at Calvary, that piercing exclamation on the cross incontestably evinces, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Contemplate these examples. While they confirm the reality, they illustrate the nature of the case described.

But sad and afflicting as this case is, shall we deem it utterly hopeless? Shall the person thus heavily afflicted be left to sink into despondency? God forbid! The text unfolds a remedy. It reminds the sufferer, that there is an adequate Consolation provided. It directs him where this Consolation may be found. "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Though he is walking in darkness, yet let him walk in faith. Though he see no light, yet let him "trust in the name of the Lord." The Name of the Lord denotes that glorious and condescending display of his infinite perfections, by which he has manifested him-

⁴ Job, xix. 6, 7, 8. ⁵ Psalm, xlii. 1. 3. ⁶ Psalm, lxxxviii. ⁷ Lam. iii. 1. 9.

self to us in his word, as "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" the Name which the Almighty vindicates to himself, "A Just God, and a Saviour.* This is his Name for ever, and this is his memorial unto all generations." In *this* Name let the pious mourner trust. Let him confide in the perfections of Jehovah; those essential and moral attributes of the God-head, which in the covenant of grace are irrevocably pledged, and harmoniously exercised, for the security and the happiness of every penitent believer. "Let him stay upon his God." This expression intimates the stability and the perseverance with which this trust should be accompanied. Is he heavy laden? Let him cast his burden on the Lord. Is he ready to sink? Let him rely on "the Everlasting Arms." Is he tempted to consider his situation desperate? Let him patiently wait God's time and mode of deliverance. Such are the directions given. Could any directions have been given more admirably adapted to the case? The conduct prescribed is exactly calculated to animate and sustain the fainting soul. How was Job supported in the darkest night of affliction? By his rooted confidence in the perfections of the Almighty. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."† How was David supported under his complicated trials? By a similar confidence. He has left upon record an acknowledgment of the Consolation which he had himself derived from trusting in the name of the Lord. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."‡

But the text, while it prescribes the conduct to be pursued, implies also its success. Let the person follow the directions given, and he shall not follow them in vain. Let him confide in the perfections of Jehovah, and he shall receive that help which the perfections of Jehovah warrant him to expect. "For the Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him."§ In every exhortation to trust in God, this assurance, if not expressly added, must be constantly understood. The help indeed may not always be vouchsafed at the desired time. But "though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry." It may not always be granted in

* Isaiah, xlv. 21. † Job, xiii. 15. ‡ Psalm, xxvii. 13. § Nahum, i. 7.

the expected manner: but still it will not be altogether withheld. If the Lord sees not fit to remove the burden, he will yet communicate strength to bear it. If he chooses, that for a season we should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will himself be with us: and though his rod and his staff may not sensibly *comfort* us, yet they will assuredly, however invisibly, *protect* us from every enemy; and will at last guide our feet into the way of peace. The text itself strongly intimates this truth. The expression, "Let him stay upon his God," evidently implies the present security and the final deliverance of the person addressed. May we not appeal to the universal testimony of experience in confirmation of this conclusion? Did ever any "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God," and not eventually receive the recompense of their faith? Was Job's confidence exercised in vain? No. "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning. Was David disappointed of his hope? Hearken to his own declarations. "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."*

Such is a general statement of the case described, and of the Consolation provided for it.

II. I shall lead those, who are concerned, to make a particular application of the subject to themselves.

It is possible, my brethren, that there may be some among you, who feel yourselves deeply interested in the statement which has been given. The case described is in fact a counterpart of your own case. Your image is the very image, which has been portrayed; your affliction the very affliction, which has been represented as the object of commiseration. While "fearing the Lord, and obeying the voice of his servant," you are yet "walking in darkness, and see no light."

Perhaps you are involved in worldly troubles. Through your own former imprudence, through the cruelty and the injustice of others, through unforeseen and unavoidable calamities, you are reduced to poverty and want. Ruin stares you in the face. Earthly friends forsake you. No human means of relief appear.—Perhaps you are laboring

* Psalm, xl. 1, 2.

under bodily pain and sickness. You have hitherto tried every remedy without success. Your disease seems to be beyond the reach of medicine. You can look forward to nothing, but to a wretched existence, and to a lingering departure out of life.—Perhaps your distress is of a spiritual nature. You are distracted with doubts and fears as to your interest in Christ and your acceptance with God. The light of the divine countenance is withdrawn from you. The enemy assaults you with his fiery darts. The corruptions of your own heart appear to be enlarged. You are saying to yourselves, ‘If it be so, why am I thus? Can I be a child of God, and yet be thus forsaken and distressed? If the Lord indeed regarded me with favor, would he suffer me to be thus overwhelmed with gloom and despondency?’ —In some of these respects, or in others resembling these, your circumstances correspond with those described. You then are the persons, to whom the prophet addresses his exhortation. For you the Consolation provided is designed. May the Blessed Spirit, the Comforter, apply it with energy to your hearts, and enable you to appropriate it in all its fulness!

One general attendant on your disconsolate condition is a disposition to conclude, that your situation is without a parallel; that none were ever afflicted like yourselves; consequently that you are peculiar objects of the divine displeasure. Let the examples which have been cited, correct these erroneous sentiments. Many persons have trodden the same dreary paths which you are treading. Many characters eminent for their piety, many distinguished favorites of heaven, have at times “walked in darkness, and have seen no light.” Deem not then your case a solitary case. Deem not your affliction any proof that God regards you with abhorrence. Set these illustrious patterns before your eyes. “When their soul fainted within them, they remembered the Lord.” They trusted in his name, and were holpen. They stayed upon their God, and their faces were not ashamed. Follow these examples. Trust ye in the name of the Lord; and stay upon your God. Call to mind his infinite perfections.

Remember that God is *Almighty*. Though your case be grievous, nay, to all appearance desperate, yet it is within the reach of Almighty power. The Lord’s hand is not

shortened that it cannot save : neither does his counsel fail from the want of instruments to accomplish his sovereign purposes. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" There is no depth of misery, out of which he cannot extricate. There is no temptation, from which he cannot make a way of escape. *There is no darkness, into which he cannot pour a ray of light. Trust then in the power of the Almighty. Were it an arm of flesh, on which you were exhorted to confide, you might reasonably object. But it is the arm of the Lord of Hosts, on which you are directed to repose. On such an arm you cannot object to confide.

Remember that God is *Wise*. He is infinite in wisdom as well as in power. He is "the only wise God." Trust then in his wisdom. He discerns what is best for you. He who has appointed your present affliction, knows what particular need you have of it ; knows what particular good it is designed to work out for you. You are short-sighted, and cannot see far off. The relief which you are earnestly desiring, if immediately granted, might prove in the end the very reverse of a blessing. Though you are "walking in darkness and see no light," yet recollect that "with God there is no darkness at all : " and if he does not instantly dissipate the clouds, which intercept your prospect ; it is because he perceives that your present darkness will most effectually promote your future and eternal interests.

Remember that God is *Merciful*. This is a perfection by which he rejoiceth to be known. When he shewed his glory unto Moses, he "made all his goodness pass before him, saying, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands. Trust then in this perfection of the Lord. Be assured, that while he afflicts, he tenderly feels for you, and pities your affliction. He knoweth your frame : he remembereth that you are but dust. He will not lay more upon you than he will enable you to bear. He will not lay more upon you than he sees is eventually connected with your advantage. Whenever your present darkness can be removed consistently with your own good, it will most surely be taken away. For the Lord delighteth in mercy.

Remember that God is *Faithful*. "He is the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that

love him.—Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away.—Neither shall there fail one word of all his good promise.” Trust then in his faithfulness and truth ; those glorious perfections which he has so fully manifested in his dealings with the children of men. Hath he not said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.—They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.—Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me ;” Is he not faithful who hath promised ? “ Though you walk in darkness and see no light,” is there not a ground of strong consolation in the following declaration of the Lord by his prophet Isaiah ? “ I will bring the blind by a way that they know not ; I will lead them into paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”*

Call to mind the endeared relation, in which this great and glorious Being condescends to stand connected with you. He is *your* God ; the God who hath declared of all that embrace his covenant, “ They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” Yes ; “ thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,” the God whom thou fearest, the voice of whose servant thou obeyest ; the God, in whose name thou trustest, and on whom thou stayest, is *thy* God. He is thy God, though thou art not sensible that he is. He is present with thee, though thou seest him not. All his glorious perfections are engaged to preserve, to deliver, and to bless thee. “ In a little wrath he hideth his face from thee for a moment : but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy upon thee.” For a short season he may seem to rebuke and chasten : yet his rebukes and chastenings are expressions of his love, and in the end will surely “ yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them, which are exercised thereby.” The clouds which obscure thy prospects, will be soon dispersed. Thy night shall be turned into day. “ Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself.” Secure at length within the wished-for haven, thou shalt look back on the gloomy and tempestuous ocean, on which thou hast been tossed, and with heart-felt thankfulness shalt say, “ It is good for me that I have been

* Isaiah, xlii. 16.

afflicted.—Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees.” Believe and fear not. With David, “encourage thyself in the Lord.” With David, in the prospect of approaching deliverance, exclaim, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

But are there not others, to whom also the subject may be profitably applied: others, who fear not God, and obey not the voice of his servant? To such indeed the text speaks not Consolation: but it suggests some highly solemn and momentous reflections. Can you, my brethren, plead an exemption from all those troubles, to which the Godly are exposed? Have you made a covenant with adversity? Are you at an agreement with affliction? Though your mountain now standeth fast, may it never be moved? Though at present light shineth on your paths, may you never walk in darkness? Be not deceived. “How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!” You have no security against worldly losses and calamities, against bodily pain and sickness, against those dreadful forebodings, and overwhelming terrors, which the prospect of death continually inspires. In such seasons of darkness and dismay, whither will you flee for light and comfort? You can have no confidence towards God; for you fear him not. He is not *your* God; for you obey not the voice of his servant. You cannot trust in his name: all his perfections are pledged to effect your ruin. You cannot stay upon his arm: it is lifted up for your destruction. Will any of your idols, whom you have feared and obeyed instead of God, in that day afford you Consolation? Will they sustain your trembling steps, will they cheer your sinking spirits, when distress and anguish come upon you? Ah! No. They are all lying vanities, which cannot profit. They are all broken reeds, which only pierce the hand of him who leans on them. “Your rock is not as our Rock.” Hear your doom pronounced by the voice of him who cannot lie. “Thus saith the Lord, Cursed is the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.—Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye

have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow?"*

One only way of escape remains. Now, "while the evil days come not," make God your friend. "Sanctify the Lord God of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Obey the voice of his servant. Obey the voice of his Son: that Son, whom he has from heaven commanded you to hear: that Son, whom he hath sent into the world to "give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace." No longer be deaf to Him, who speaketh. No longer shut your eyes against the truth. Lay hold of the hand stretched out to save you. So shall you find rest unto your souls. "The Lord shall be your hope in the day of evil, and his light shall shine upon your paths."

SERMON XLIV.

Expostulation with Careless Sinners.

JONAH, i. 6.

What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

THE circumstances, which occasioned this address, are as extraordinary as the address itself is striking. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it: for their wickedness is come up before me." But Jonah obeyed not the command. Alarmed at the difficulties of the office imposed on him, he refused to execute it, and foolishly thought, by escaping into another country, to hide himself from the Lord, and to avoid any further commissions of a similar kind. "He rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he

* Jeremiah, xvii. 5. Isaiah, i. 11.

found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." The folly and impiety of this proceeding must excite our astonishment. Can a man hide himself from the Almighty? Did any one ever harden himself against God, and prosper? The Lord soon convinced his rebellious servant of the vanity of his presumptuous attempt by means which might at once chastise his disobedience, and recal him to his duty. "For he sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was likely to be broken." Jonah, in his criminal endeavor to avoid an imaginary difficulty, had exposed himself to real danger. The ship in which he had embarked was in the most imminent peril. The storm increased to an unusual height, so as to baffle the skill of the mariners. Almost despairing of safety, they had but one course to pursue. "They cried every man unto his God, and cast forth the wares, that were in the ship, into the sea to lighten it of them." In the moment of danger the most senseless and ignorant will endeavor to pray: while at the prospect of death men will readily part with every thing, which they before esteemed most valuable, to save their lives. But where in this extremity is Jonah? Doubtless, struck with remorse, and trembling with terror, he is praying to his God. Doubtless, regarding the storm as a minister of Divine vengeance, he is bewailing his guilty flight, and supplicating mercy. No. More stupid far than these idolators, he is "gone down into the sides of the ship, and lies there fast asleep." Behold, my brethren, a striking proof of the dreadful nature and the destructive tendency of sin. See how it hardens the heart, deadens the conscience, and renders the sinner insensible of the danger, which threatens to overwhelm him. Exposed every instant to impending death, under the just displeasure of the Almighty, in the very act of disobedience, can Jonah sleep? Well may the affrighted ship-master, though he knows but a small part of the circumstances of his passenger's case, well may he express his astonishment at this instance of hardened unconcern. Well may he reprove the unfeeling prophet in the animated language of the text, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" "Is this a time to lie at ease and take thy rest? Death stares thee in the face, every moment may he

thy last. Shake off thy unseasonable drowsiness. "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not."

Such were the circumstances, which occasioned this address. But is Jonah the only person, to whom the reproof is applicable? Alas! There are numbers in the world, there are some, it is to be feared, in every congregation, to whom it may with equal propriety be addressed. Every impenitent and careless sinner, every person, who is thoughtless and inactive about the concerns of his soul, resembles Jonah. Like the deluded prophet, he is *sleeping* on the brink of eternal ruin. To every such person then we may exclaim, in the language of the text, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God."

In making this application of the passage, I shall begin with more particularly describing the persons, whom I purpose afterwards to address.

Sleep is a state of inactivity, of insensibility, of security. Such is the state of thousands with respect to their souls. Some we discover plunged into the most awful unconcern as to their spiritual interests. At every point they are impenetrable. The most alarming providences, the most signal judgments, occurring in their sight, perhaps within their houses, are insufficient to rouse them from their senseless stupor. Incessantly occupied in the things of the present life, in amassing or in spending money, they live as if they were no better than the brutes, which perish. Happy would it be for them, if they could perish like the brutes. But there is a Judgment-Seat, before which they must one day stand, and answer for their criminal indifference to the things of God. O that they would now feel the value of their souls, before it shall be too late to feel it! That they would now bestow upon eternal things some portion of that activity and watchfulness, which they employ in worldly concerns! Is wealth their aim? Is pleasure their pursuit? Here they are watchful and diligent enough. Every opportunity of furthering their favorite object is eagerly sought, and carefully improved. Is their property invaded? Is their pleasure abridged? Here they can feel; here they can betray the keenest sensibility. But God and eternity, and the care of their souls, are subjects which affect them not.—My brethren, in characters of this description see Jonah sleeping in the storm.

But there are other persons, to whom also the resemblance may be applied : persons, who, though not equally hardened with those already mentioned, yet are no less justly liable to the charge of sleeping on the brink of eternity. They are not so ignorant and senseless as not occasionally to think of death and judgment, of heaven and hell ; and there are times, in which they experience some secret misgivings as to their safety. But such unwelcome subjects, such gloomy apprehensions, they speedily dismiss : and sink again into a false repose. The still small voice of conscience is heard within, and in some solemn moment whispers to their hearts an awful warning. ‘Thou must die : what after death will become of thy soul ? Dost thou well to be so careless of its interests ; to be so negligent of prayer, of the Bible, of religious ordinances ? Dost thou well to be so immoderately plunged in care and business : to be so devoted to pleasure and amusement ? What can wealth avail ? What can thy gay companions profit thee hereafter ? They will all leave thee comfortless. Then renounce them now. Prepare to meet thy God.’ By what argument do they silence this faithful monitor, and drown his friendly voice ? By some such refuges of lies as these : ‘Man is weak and God is merciful. He will not judge his creatures with unrelenting strictness. His threatenings are intended merely to alarm, and will never really be executed upon us. Business demands attention. If we neglect our worldly affairs, how shall we maintain or advance our families ? Allowances will be made to persons in our circumstances. We shall find a door of escape. We shall have peace, though we follow the imaginations of our own hearts.’ Such are the reasonings, with which these persons dissipate their fears, and lull their minds into a presumptuous security. They hear the tempest raging. They feel the vessel shaken. But they stop their ears, and fold their arms, and cry, ‘There is no danger.’

Advert to a third class of characters, whose state is no less strikingly depicted by that of the infatuated prophet. They are such as possess much stronger convictions of the importance of religion, and much clearer views of its nature, than the persons last described. They cannot pacify their consciences with the delusive reasonings specified above. They cannot promise to themselves peace in the ways of sin. They are sensible, that without repentance towards God, and faith

towards our Lord Jesus Christ, they can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. But here observe the deceitfulness of sin. They cannot find time to repent and believe *at present*. They are now occupied in other matters. And when these shall be accomplished, then they will begin with earnestness to make preparation for eternity. 'In some few years we shall be more disposed to attend to serious concerns. We shall then be satiated with the world. Its pleasures will have lost their charms : and our minds, thus freed from dissipation, will be more capable of engaging in religious studies. The objects which we are now pursuing, will be attained : our families will be grown up and settled in the world ; a comfortable provision will be secured for our declining years. Consequently we shall possess far greater leisure, than our present occupations admit, for serving God and frequenting his ordinances : nor will any of these causes, which now compel us to defer the necessary work of repentance, continue any longer to operate.' My brethren, are not such persons *sleeping* on the brink of everlasting destruction, dreaming of years to come, of distant opportunities for working out their salvation ; when, this very night, the floods of divine vengeance may burst upon their unprepared and defenceless souls ?

But what need is there for further particulars ? Every person, of every description, who does not make the care of his soul the first, the grand, the leading object of his attention ; who has not humbly and heartily turned to God through Jesus Christ : who is not now living the life, which he lives in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God ; every such person in fact differs nothing from Jonah sleeping in the storm. With every such person then I would now most seriously *expostulate* in the language of the text, "What meanest thou, O sleeper ?" Dead to God, alive to sin, neglecting thy precious, immortal soul, what meanest thou ?

Consider the *value* of the soul. It is that part of you in which you resemble God. It is a spark of heavenly flame. It is capable of experiencing exquisite delight, or unutterable anguish. It is born for eternity. In this respect the soul is inconceivably valuable. In this respect, one soul infinitely surpasses in value the world and all things in it. The world, and all things in it, will one day perish and be no more. But the soul will never perish. Add together

all the years of all men, who ever lived ; and when the soul shall have lived so long, it will be no nearer to an end, than if it had only begun to live. There will be no end to it ; no end to its existence ; no end to the happiness or misery, to which on its departure from the body it will be instantly assigned. Before your body shall be committed to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, your immortal spirit will be unchangeably fixed in a state of bliss, or of torment beyond conception great, and will there abide for ever. What meanest thou then by neglecting thy precious soul ? Are any of the things, for the sake of which thou art neglecting it, to be compared in value with it ? What will it avail, that thou hast here attained to a somewhat larger portion of worldly distinction, of riches, of power, of enjoyment, when in hell thou shalt " lift up thy eyes, being in torments ?"

Consider the *imminent hazard* to which you are exposing your soul. " The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.—The Lord will render to every man according to his works : to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."* If you are living in the neglect of your soul, you are doing evil. You are not obeying the truth, but are obeying unrighteousness. Should you die in this state, tribulation and anguish must be your portion. What security then do you possess, that you shall not die in this state ? What security do you possess, that you shall not die this day, this hour ? Many die suddenly : why may not you ? You are provoking the wrath and despising the long-suffering of that God, at whose word all nature will be armed against you. At his command the tempest pursued rebellious Jonah. At his command fire may fall from heaven and consume you : the earth may open under your feet and swallow you. Do you deem these judgments unlikely to take place ? The Lord has ten thousand messengers to execute his will. Fever or madness may in a moment seize you, and render you incapable of further thought or action. Palsy or apoplexy may instantaneously suspend your faculties, or terminate your life. Death, in unnumbered ways, can assault your frail and perishable frame. What meanest thou, O sleeper ? Death standeth at the

* Rom. i. 18. il. 8, 9.

door, ready to transport thy guilty soul into eternal misery. Is this a time to sleep, to sit at ease, to bless thyself in thy heart, and feel secure?

Consider the *price* which has been paid for your soul. It has not been "bought with corruptible things, as with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." The eternal Son of God, the Lord of Life and Glory, came down from heaven; was made man; encountered poverty, persecution, infamy; endured the contradiction of sinners, the malice of Satan, the wrath of God; expired in bitter agonies on the cross; and to what purpose? That he might save your guilty soul. That he might atone for your sins; might reconcile you to the Father; might purchase for you the gift of the Holy Spirit; might open to you the kingdom of heaven. And will you neglect so great salvation, so dearly bought, so fraught with richest mercies? "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" Did Christ die to save thy soul, and wilt thou obstinately destroy it? Did he manifest such tender anxiety for thy salvation? Did he undergo so many miseries to procure it? Wilt thou persist in hardened unconcern, in slothful inactivity from day to day, from year to year, and not deem salvation worth thy trouble? Art not thou ashamed and confounded to reflect on thy criminal, thy ungrateful conduct? "Arise and call upon thy God."

Arise. Shake off thy stupor. Break the fetters with which thou hast been bound. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Now, while the Spirit of God is striving with thee, improve the glorious opportunity. Make one vigorous effort for eternity. "While it is called to day, harden not thy heart." The years past are sufficient to have been wasted in a sleep so ruinous to thy highest interests. Henceforth redeem the time. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not."

Call upon thy God. Retire into thy secret chamber. Open thy heart to God. Pour out thy soul in penitent confessions before thy injured Saviour. Implore his forgiveness. Pray for mercy, for grace, for holiness. Cry out with repentant Ephraim, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned"—with the humble publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"—with the apostle ready to sink, "Lord save me, I perish!" Let it now be said of you, as it was once

said of the awakened Paul, "Behold he prayeth:"* and the same God, who sent to him a comforter, will not leave you comfortless.

The ship-master indeed, when he encouraged Jowah to call upon his God, added, "If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." While he recommended the measure, he expressed a doubt of its success. But we are not left to uncertainty. When the ministers of the Gospel exhort you to pray, they exhort you in the fullest confidence, that you will not pray in vain. They know assuredly, that if through faith in the Redeemer's blood you earnestly call upon God, he *will* think upon you, that you perish not. They know assuredly, that "whosoever thus calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." They know assuredly, that Jesus sitteth on the throne of grace, and holdeth out the golden sceptre of his love: that he inviteth all to come unto him, and promises rest to every one that comes. Though the sinner has been long plunged in the most criminal security, yet if he now arise, and call upon his God, the Lord will not reject him. 'Look unto me,' (cries the compassionate and Almighty Friend of sinners,) 'look unto me, and be saved. My blood shall wash out all thy guilt. My grace shall cleanse thy polluted soul. I will take away the heart of stone, and will give thee an heart of flesh. I will love thee freely. I will "put thee among the children: and thou shalt call me, my Father; and shalt not turn away from me."' My brethren, can you listen unmoved to these gracious declarations? Is there one sinner awakened to a sense of his spiritual danger? "Arise, and call upon thy God." Harken to the Saviour's invitations. Harken to his promises of free acceptance, of full forgiveness. "Arise, he calleth thee."

But there is another description of persons, to whom also the subject may be profitably applied. Ye, servants of the Lord, who are professedly walking in the ways of godliness; who have fled for refuge to the cross of Jesus; who, in the habitual tenor of your lives, are led by his spirit: do ye never stand in need of the admonition in the text? Do ye give *all* diligence to grow in grace and knowledge, and to add one degree of Christian improvement to another? Are ye "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of

* Acts, ix. 11.

the Lord?—Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, are ye pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" Or, on the contrary, do ye not often slumber and sleep when ye ought to be watchful and alert? From want of zeal and energy in resisting the enemy, do ye not frequently suffer him to get advantage over you? Are ye not often remiss in prayer, in the study of the Scriptures, in spiritual exercises? Are there not many duties imperfectly fulfilled, many talents imperfectly improved, many privileges imperfectly enjoyed? Is there not much work remaining to be done in your own hearts, in your families, in the world around you? Arise, trim your lamps. "Sleep ye not, as do others: but watch, and be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and, for an helmet, the hope of Salvation.*—Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men, that wait for their Lord." As faithful servants, be more diligently occupied in your master's service: "and *that*, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is your salvation nearer, than when ye believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand: therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."†

* 1 Thess. v. 6. 8.

† Romans, xiii. 11, 12; 13, 14.

SERMON XLV.

The Grace of Christ Sufficient for his People.

2 CORINTHIANS, xii. 9.

My Grace is Sufficient for thee.

IN arduous undertakings, hope of success is one of the most powerful incentives to exertion and perseverance. The stronger is the probability of obtaining the object in view, the greater will be the zeal and activity in the pursuit of it; while nothing more effectually tends to damp the spirit of enterprize, than the chilling apprehension of defeat and final disappointment. If this remark be true with respect to temporal concerns, it is equally just as to those of a spiritual nature. Hope of victory is the cordial which invigorates the Christian warrior. Remove this hope; his ardor cools, his energy is relaxed. Dispirited by the uncertainty which envelopes his future prospects, and doubtful whether even his most strenuous labors will be ultimately successful, he is less capable of contending with the numerous enemies of his salvation. Hence he is exhorted to put on hope as a helmet, which may cover his head in the day of battle. Hence the most animating promises are employed to sustain his drooping spirits, and to inspire him with the assurance of a favorable issue.

Among these promises, the declaration of Christ himself in the text claims a distinguished place. The words were originally addressed to St. Paul. The Lord, foreseeing that the apostle was in danger of being "exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations" vouchsafed to him, was mercifully pleased to counteract this tendency by giving to him "a thorn in the flesh." What was the particular nature of this trial we are not expressly told. But probably it consisted in a consciousness of some personal defect, which he was apprehensive might obstruct his future usefulness. Under this apprehension, he "besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him." Did the Lord

grant the petition? No. He saw not fit to remove the affliction: but he added a most consolatory promise, which would render the removal unnecessary. He said to his afflicted servant, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Be not afraid. Thou shalt not sink under the burden, I will sustain thee. None of the evil consequences, which thou fearest, shall ensue: "for my strength is made perfect in (*thy*) weakness." Weak in thyself, and wholly inadequate to the work assigned, thou shalt be strong in me, and in the power of my might.' Observe the influence of this cheering promise on the apostle's mind. His fears are dispelled. His hope revives. No longer dejected at the thought of his own insufficiency, he exclaims, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Such was the occasion on which these words were originally spoken. But the promise which they contain is not to be confined to the apostle. Doubtless it was intended for the comfort and the encouragement of numbers in all ages. Jesus Christ is still the same: "the same yesterday, and to-day; and for ever."* His tender and watchful solicitude over his people, his power and willingness to succor and sustain them, are still the same. Still then may they be exhorted to confide in the assurance that "His grace is sufficient for them."

In this application of the subject, and with the view to a suitable improvement, I purpose,

I. To illustrate the Tendency and Meaning of the Promise.

II. To point out the Persons to whom the Promise belongs.

I. "My grace is sufficient for thee." The grace of Christ, in the language of Scripture, most usually denotes either that rich and unmerited love, which prompted him to undertake the work of our redemption; or that invincible power, which, through the agency of the Spirit, He exerts for accomplishing this glorious undertaking. It is in the latter of these senses that the expression is to be understood in the text. Christ is to his People the Fountain of all spiritual life and strength. By his grace they are quickened and supported. By his grace they are restrained, directed, comfort-

* Heb. xiii. 8.

ed. Should this source on any occasion fail them ; should its supplies be withdrawn or intercepted ; should they prove either in measure or in force deficient : the inevitable consequences must be defeat, shame, and apostacy. For ever then to preclude all ideas of such a failure, effectually to obviate every apprehension of such consequences, is the evident tendency of the promise in the text. It declares, that the Grace of Christ is *sufficient* for his People. It implies, that in every possible emergency, under all possible circumstances, his power shall be adequate to his People's wants ; his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness. Impotent in themselves, they shall yet "do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth them. *Though* troubled on every side, yet they shall not be distressed ; *though* perplexed, yet not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed."*

Such is the general meaning of the promise. Let the subject however be further investigated. Let some specific instances be adduced of the sufficiency of Christ. Let us advert to some of the leading purposes, for which his grace is sufficient for his people.

1. It is sufficient for supporting them under trials. The people of Christ are not exempt from trials ; on the contrary, many are the troubles of the righteous. Many are the painful struggles, to which their faith, their patience, their constancy, are exposed. No trial however can befall them, but such as Christ can enable them to bear. He can proportion their strength to their day. He is not unacquainted with the infirmity of their nature ; for he himself took part of the same ; and, sin only excepted, was "in all things made like unto his brethren.—In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."† Does he then permit his people to be tempted ? With the temptation also he makes a way to escape. Does he put the cup of sorrow into their hands ? He infuses an exhilarating cordial into the bitter draught. Does he demand of them self-denying privations for his sake ? He provides them with strength adequate to the arduous duty. "You have heard of the patience of Job." Visited with complicated and unparalleled afflictions, instigated by the partner of his affections to the most desperate measures,

* 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

† Hebrews, ii. 17, 18.

harassed by the horrible suggestions of his spiritual enemies, irritated by the blind perverseness of his friends, who, instead of pouring balm into his wounds, by their unjust insinuations cruelly aggravated his sufferings, the holy man yet maintained his confidence in God, and in his patience possessed his soul. What power supported him in this unequal contest? Christ was sufficient for him. The Lord sustained his servant; and by the secret communication of his Spirit baffled the rage and malice of the tempter. The bush, though burning with fire, was not consumed; for God was in it. What eminent examples of the strength of Christ made perfect in human weakness, does that bright assemblage of distinguished worthies, recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, present to our view. What illustrious proofs of the sufficiency of his grace are exhibited in the primitive Christians; who, "out of weakness were made strong; who, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness," endured a great fight of afflictions; rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake; and resisted even unto blood!

2. The Grace of Christ is sufficient for crowning the feeble efforts of his People with success. Arduous and important are the services, to which they frequently are called. In themselves they are wholly incompetent to the task assigned. The means, which they possess, are in all appearance utterly inadequate to the end proposed. No probable expectation of a prosperous issue can be indulged. But Christ, by his Grace, renders them superior to every difficulty. He inspires them with courage. He endues them with wisdom. He makes their enemies to be at peace with them. All hearts are in his hands. All events are at his disposal. He imperceptibly restrains, overrules, or frustrates the counsels of their adversaries; causes their most unlikely projects to work together for the accomplishment of his People's wishes; and thus in the weakness of the instruments, by which he fulfils his purposes, proclaims the excellence of his sovereign power. When Moses urged his incapacity for the commission conferred on him as a plea for declining it, "What am I, that I shall go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"—By what argument did the Lord expose the futil-

ity of this objection? By a declaration equivalent with that in the text, "Certainly I will be with thee."* When in after ages obstacles, the most formidable and seemingly insuperable, opposed the rebuilding of the Temple; by what means did the Lord revive the hopes of his servant Zerubbabel, and urge him to a vigorous prosecution of his work? By a promise corresponding with the promise under review. "Not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."†. In both these instances the event singularly evinces the power of Christ, and incontestably shews that his Grace is sufficient for his People. Is a still more striking illustration of this truth required? Contemplate the first preachers of the Gospel, by nature timid, by education illiterate, yet boldly standing before kings, and speaking "with a mouth and a wisdom, which not all their adversaries were able to gainsay or resist"—unsupported by the influence of wealth or authority, yet successfully propagating their doctrines in opposition to the pride, the prejudices, and the passions of mankind—despised, reviled, persecuted, yet eventually triumphing over every foe, and erecting the banners of the cross on the ruins of paganism and idolatry. How shall we account for this surprising phenomenon? The Lord was with his servants. His Grace was sufficient for them. His strength was made perfect in their weakness.

3. The Grace of Christ is sufficient for emancipating his People from the power of sin. By nature they serve sin. They obey it in some of the lusts thereof, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" and yield their members as servants of uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity. By the new nature indeed, which they have received from the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, they have been led to discover their wretched and disgraceful slavery, earnestly to long for deliverance from the power of sin, and strenuously to contend against its usurped dominion. But while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. They soon perceive their own insufficiency for the conflict. Exposed to the machinations of a subtle tempter, to the allurements of

* Exodus, ch. 11, 12.

† Zech. iv. 6, 7.

an ensnaring world, to the suggestions of an evil and a deceitful heart, they are soon taught to feel that their own strength is perfect weakness. But in Christ they may have help. His Grace is sufficient for them. The professed object of his incarnation and sacrifice was to save his people from their sins: to rescue them from the bondage of spiritual corruption; to "redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." For the attainment of this important object he possesses adequate means. He furnishes his followers with suitable armor for the fight. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is put into their hands. The shield of faith, by which all the fiery darts of the wicked may be quenched, is provided for their use. Are they occasionally repulsed? Christ, by effectual motives, rouses them to fresh exertions. Are they at times ready to faint? With the hidden manna he renovates their exhausted strength and infuses into them new spirit and vigor for the combat. Thus by unceasing supplies of his Grace he enables them to maintain a successful opposition against the power of sin; progressively causes them to trample on every enemy, and brings them more and more into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is this sufficiency of Christ for the sanctification of his people, which is the foundation of that most encouraging promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."* It was a conviction of this sufficiency, which supported the apostle under the depressing experience of his inherent depravity. "O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"†

These particulars will serve to illustrate the Tendency and Meaning of the Promise in the text.

II. I proceed to point out the Persons, to whom the Promise belongs.

In every exposition of the promises of Scripture it is highly important that the persons, to whom they belong, should be distinctly and accurately marked; that on the one hand, any presumptuous abuse of the mercy proclaimed may be precluded: and that, on the other hand, those who are justly entitled to the consolation provided, may be induced

* Romans, vi. 14. † Romans, vii. 24, 25.

to appropriate it. The Grace of Christ is sufficient for *his People*. These are the persons to whom this promise belongs. Who then are his People? How shall they be known? By what distinguishing features shall their relation to him, and their consequent interest in the promise be ascertained? Very numerous are the characteristics, by which the people of Christ are designated. I shall select three discriminating marks, which bear a particular reference to the subject under review.

The first of these is "a simple and an avowed dependence on the grace of Christ." This dependence is indeed inseparably connected with an interest in the promise before us. Those only, who honor Christ, can reasonably expect to be honored by him. Those only, who rely upon him for support, can entertain a Scriptural hope of receiving it. To whom are the promises of strength and blessing given? To those, who, in an utter renunciation of their own strength, wait upon Christ; who trust and hope in him. "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength.—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."* Such is the hope, such is the trust of the persons described. Feeling their own weakness, they "have no confidence in the flesh." They place no reliance on their own goodness, power, or policy; on the uprightness of their intentions; on the sincerity of their resolutions, on the efficacy of their exertions. Believing the declarations and the promises of Christ, they depend simply on his Grace. They know that "without him they can do nothing." They confess, that "they are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves: but that their sufficiency is of God." To his Grace alone they unreservedly ascribe their past success, and their present attainments. "By the grace of God we are what we are—It is God, who worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." To the same operating cause alone they look for future ability, and further advancement. "It is Christ, who strengtheneth us.—Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is, that shall tread down our enemies."

Another distinguishing feature in their character is "a steady and conscientious adherence to the path of duty." Assuredly convinced that they have no other ground of de-

* Isaiah, xl. 31. Jeremiah, xvii. 7.

pendence but the Grace of Christ, they at the same time are sensible, that every pretension to its being exerted in their favor must be absolutely abandoned, unless they "are found in the way of righteousness." With what confidence indeed could they rely on his promised help, should they be allowedly violating his commandments, and perversely resisting his will. Is the object which they have in view, forbidden? Are the temper and spirit, which they manifest in the pursuit of it, unchristian? Are the means, by which they aim to accomplish their end, unlawful? Under any of these circumstances, they cannot look for divine assistance, nor expect that the power of Christ will be made perfect in their weakness. Such an expectation they justly deem to be presumptuous and vain. If they would indulge a hope, that the Grace of Christ will be sufficient for them, they must approve their hearts before him. Hence are they scrupulously exact in regulating their conduct by the law of God. To this perfect standard of moral excellence they habitually refer their words, their thoughts, and their actions; and daily strive after a nearer conformity to its holy precepts. Sin is the enemy, whose dominion they reject with unfeigned abhorrence; against whose approaches they guard with watchful and unceasing solicitude: the enemy, who, if they should carelessly expose themselves to his assaults, and willingly endure his yoke, would destroy their peace, would undermine their hope, and effectually exclude them from an interest in the promise.

To these discriminating particulars in their character may be subjoined "a diligent and reverential use of the appointed means of grace." Christ in the whole dispensation of his Grace, is free and uncontrolled. Neither in the mode nor in the measure in which he communicates his gifts, is he influenced by any merits or pretensions in his creatures. He "divideth to every man severally as he will." At the same time he has been pleased to institute certain external observances, to the humble and attentive regard of which he has by promise annexed a proportionate increase of spiritual blessings. Hence these observances, are entitled "means of grace." They are means by which Grace is imparted and augmented. In themselves they possess no inherent efficacy, nor any necessary connection with the end, to which they are appointed. All their virtue is derived from the ap-

pointment and the promise of Him, who hath "the residue of the Spirit." Being however appointed, they are become tests of our faith, of our humility, of our obedience. Accordingly as we neglect or employ these instituted means, we testify our contempt or our respect for the institutions of Christ, and for the gifts which they are intended to convey. Accordingly as we neglect or employ these means, will be our deficiency or our growth in Grace. Christ indeed has not bound himself to the use of particular means: nor has he limited his choice of the instruments, to which, in fulfilling the good pleasure of his will, he may think fit to have recourse. On some occasions, to demonstrate the sovereignty of his power, he may, without the intervention of the appointed means, communicate his Grace to man. But such communications we have no warrant to expect. Through the ordinary channels only can we reasonably look for a supply of the water of life. In a diligent and reverential use of the means of grace alone, can we confidently hope to partake of that fulness, which is treasured up in Christ.—Such are the sentiments of the persons delineated. In conformity with these sentiments, what is their conduct? While with a simple dependence, they rely on the Grace of Christ; while in a conscientious adherence to the path of duty, they wait for his promised help; they are also active, and earnest, and faithful in improving the opportunities vouchsafed to them of "working out their own salvation with fear and trembling." In an humble submission to the divine appointment and authority, they omit not the performance of any of those duties, by which their souls may be strengthened and refreshed. With seriousness and humility they study the sacred volume. Their "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law do they meditate day and night." They are constant and devout in their attendance on public ordinances. "With joy do they draw water out of these wells of salvation." Especially are they instant in prayer, in fervent, believing, persevering prayer; which penetrates within the veil, and with never-failing efficacy draws down seasonable supplies of strength and comfort in every time of need.

Such are the discriminating marks, by which, in reference to the subject under review, the People of Christ are distinguished. They, who bear these marks, are the per-

sous, to whom the promise in the text belongs. Who then among you, my brethren, are thus distinguished? Who among you, are simply depending on Christ, are making conscience of all your ways, are diligently using the means of Grace? To all who accord with this description, the consolatory declaration is addressed. You may be safely exhorted to confide in the assurance that the Grace of Christ is sufficient for you. Appropriate then to yourselves the comfort, which this assurance warrants you to take. Recollect the purposes, for which you may securely rely on the sufficiency of the promised Grace, and with the apostle "glory in your infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon you."

1. Let a consciousness of your interest in the promise inspire you with fortitude under every trial. It may be that you stand greatly in need of the support, which this consciousness is calculated to convey. Perhaps you are called to encounter trials singularly heavy. Your way is dark and intricate. Afflictions of no ordinary kind or magnitude gather round your paths, and threaten to overwhelm you with an intolerable weight. You are exposed in a peculiar manner to the seductive smiles, or to the terrifying frowns of the world. You are filled with anxious fears for your safety. You are ready to sink under the burden. Be not discouraged. Christ will give you strength. He will not lay more upon you than he will enable you to bear. "Fear not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness."—Perhaps, while supported under present troubles, you are dejected with gloomy apprehensions of future trials. When you hear of the sufferings which many eminent servants of Christ have at times endured, you are ready to exclaim, 'Should similar sufferings be reserved for us, we shall surely fall.' Dismiss such unreasonable apprehensions. We admire, it is true, the many illustrious instances of patient fortitude, and heroic magnanimity, which the history of the church exhibits. They are set forth for our admiration: but they are not set forth for our discouragement. Did the patriarchs, did the prophets, did the noble army of martyrs, stand in the day of trial? They stood not in their own strength. They could no more have

stood in their own strength, than you, under similar circumstances, could stand in yours. It was the Grace of Christ, which sustained them. Is not the same Grace engaged to sustain you? They found it sufficient. Shall not you find it sufficient? Yes, most assuredly. "As your day is, so shall your strength be.—In all these things you shall be more than conquerors, through him, who loveth you." Be then of good courage. Stablish your hearts. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice."

2. Let a sense of your interest in this gracious promise quicken and invigorate your exertions in the service of Christ. Ardent, it may be, is your desire of promoting his cause in the world. Many are the plans which you devise for advancing his kingdom and glory. But formidable obstacles threaten to prevent your success. Difficulties, seemingly insurmountable, obstruct the accomplishment of your designs. Gladly would you employ your influence, your abilities, in reforming abuses, in checking the progress of ungodliness, in turning sinners from the error of their ways. But you feel your own strength incompetent for the attainment of these ends. Your feeble efforts are insufficient to contend with the tide of authority, of prejudice, of passion, by which they are opposed. You are disheartened and dismayed. You are tempted to desist from your endeavors, and in despondency to hide your talent in the earth. Call to mind then the promise in the text. Recollect that "the weapons of your warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." Admit that your adversaries are strong. Stronger is He, that is with you. Admit that in yourselves you are weak. "Hath not God chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty?" Go forth in the strength of the Lord. If his glory be ultimately connected with the success of your designs, no weapon formed against you shall prosper. His Grace shall be sufficient for you. In his time, through his power, all impediments shall be removed. "Every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

Perhaps your sphere of usefulness is more retired and contracted. You possess not the means of promoting great and comprehensive plans. The object of your exertions in the service of Christ is of a private and limited nature. The

salvation of a beloved parent, the recovery of a lost child from sin to God, or the instruction of a poor, an unenlightened neighbor, is the point to which your efforts are directed. Hitherto your attempts have proved ineffectual. Fresh difficulties arise, and seem for ever to preclude the attainment of your wishes. You have thoughts of discontinuing your exertions. Discontinue them not. Christ can render them successful. Let the experience of your own weakness lead you more simply to depend on his promised sufficiency. Be not discouraged at repeated disappointments. Persist in your pious work. Plant and water : and God, when he sees fit, will give the increase. Nay, should even his blessing eventually be withholden ; should the specific object of your desires fail of being accomplished ; still your labor will not have been in vain in the Lord. Your prayer will return into your own bosom. Your "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope," will be abundantly recompensed in that day, when the Lord "shall make up his jewels."

3. Let a consciousness of your interest in this promise sustain and animate you in the conflict against sin. It is possible, that the work of sanctification advances far less rapidly than you had hoped. When you had expected to have enjoyed perfect freedom, and to have run, without restraint in the way of God's commandments ; you find the power of sin to be strong within you. You encounter much opposition from its secret workings. Habits, tempers, and passions, which you had thought subdued, at times revive, and threaten to recover their lost dominion : while coldness, deadness, and indifference to the things of God, occasionally invade your soul ; and seem for a season to suspend all spiritual life and feeling. Under this distressing experience of remaining weakness and corruption, you are filled with inquietude and fears. You are apprehensive, that you are engaged in an unequal contest : that, notwithstanding all your efforts you will one day fail, and with augmented shame and guilt will relapse under the power of sin. Are these your fears ? Behold the promise in the text. The Lord Jesus Christ, "who died, yea, who is risen again." for your salvation, has declared, that "his grace is sufficient for you." Is He a man, that he should lie ? Hath He said, and will he not do it ? Is He not able to keep that

which you have committed to him, able to perform the good work which he has begun in you? Be not faithless, but believing. Assured of support in every time of need, contend with renewed exertion against every foe. "Looking unto Jesus," you shall find his strength made perfect in your weakness. In an unshaken reliance on his faithfulness and power, you may now adopt the exulting language of the church, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise." Hereafter you shall sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, in those mansions of eternal rest and peace; where the body of sin shall be utterly cast off; and all those enemies, which now afflict and persecute your soul, shall "be seen no more forever."

But there is yet another description of persons, whom, in conclusion, I would seriously address. They are such as presume to vindicate the habitual and unrestrained gratification of their corrupt propensities on the plea of inability to subdue them. 'Our natures,' they cry, 'are weak; our passions strong. Temptations continually occur, and assault us with a violence, which we are unable to resist. We pretend not to justify our practices: we wish, that we could abstain from the indulgence of them: but it is useless to contend, where there is no prospect of victory.' How completely does the truth which has been discussed, expose the vanity of such attempts to palliate ungodliness! Whatever may be your natural incapacity for yielding your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Christ declares, that his Grace is sufficient for you. He offers to supply you with strength adequate to your utmost need. He promises, that if you faithfully employ the means, which he puts within your reach, "his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness." With such offers of Salvation, with such assurances of success, do you still remain the wretched slaves of sin? The reason is obvious. You do not wish to be free. You secretly love the chains which you affect to deplore. In your hearts you prefer the bondage of Satan to the yoke of Christ.—But carry forward your thoughts to that awful day, when you shall stand before his judgment-seat. At that dread tribunal, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, will you dare to urge your inability to subdue your corruptions, as a vindication of your habitual indulgence of them? Will not conscience stop your

mouth, and anticipate the answer of your offended Judge? 'Thou slothful and wicked servant, hadst thou really desired deliverance from the servitude of sin, was not I ready to deliver thee? Did not I counsel thee to come to me for help? When didst thou ever earnestly pray for my assistance? Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. Thou knewest that thou wast weak : why didst thou not come to me to strengthen thee? My Grace, if thou hadst sought it, would have been sufficient for thee. Think not, by vain excuses, to hide thy guilt. Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

With what shame, with what anguish and dismay, will this dreadful sentence overwhelm you ! Bless God ! then, that you *may* yet escape it ! Bless God ! my brethren, that his mercy is not yet exhausted towards you ! Still Christ invites you to come to him, and holds out the golden sceptre of his love. Still there is in him a sufficiency of Grace for all your wants. Continue not the weak and helpless slaves of sin, when you may become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Let him not have occasion at last to say of you, "All day long have I stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

SERMON XLVI.

Hezekiah's Fall considered and Applied.

2 CHRONICLES, xxxii. 31.

Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder, that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

AMONG the examples of singular and exalted piety recorded in the Scriptures, Hezekiah, king of Judah, occupies a distinguished place. Remarkably decisive are

the attestations in his favor. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses."^{*} But while such are the declarations respecting this pious and exemplary king; he is not therefore represented as free from imperfection. A veil is not studiously drawn over those parts of his character which are less capable of bearing examination. With an impartial regard to truth, the inspired penmen report one instance of grievous declension in this eminent servant of God: they specify one occasion, on which Hezekiah "rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up." It is this occasion, to which the text refers: when, "in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder, that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." Of this humiliating event in Hezekiah's life, the particulars are recorded in three different places of Scripture: but I have selected the account here given, because of the peculiar insight which it affords into this extraordinary transaction. While the other relations, with greater exactness, describe the nature and the aggravation of his sin, this passage admits us into the interior of this mysterious affair; discloses the secret springs of action; and thus lays open a much wider field for useful and instructive application. I shall however so far avail myself of the circumstances, which are stated in other places, as may be necessary for illustrating the subject. After having first briefly shown the nature and the aggravation of Hezekiah's Fall, I shall lead you to contemplate the particular view of it exhibited in the text.

1. All sin originates in the heart. "Out of the evil treasure of his heart, an evil man bringeth forth evil things.— Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." The multiplied wickedness of men's lives results from the corrupt and carnal principle in their hearts. At the same time,

* 2 Kings, xviii. 3. 5. 7.

this principle does not on all occasions equally manifest itself in the outward conduct. Some of its evil effects are more immediately confined to the heart; effects, however, which are not on that account less offensive and malignant in their nature. Such was the sin of Hezekiah. It did not, like that of David, break forth into gross and external violations of the divine law; but it betrayed itself in the indulgence of secret pride, in the gratification of a vain-glorious spirit, in an idolatrous exaltation of the creature above the Creator: Hezekiah's "heart was lifted up."*

But the particular nature of his sin will be more clearly discerned, if we advert to the occasion of his Fall. Berodach Baladan, king of Babylon, having heard of Hezekiah's sickness, and of the remarkable circumstances attending it, sent ambassadors to Jerusalem with letters and a present, to congratulate him on his recovery, and to enquire concerning the wonder that had been done in the land. Pleased with these flattering expressions of attention and respect from so great a monarch, and elated with a sense of his own importance, Hezekiah received the ambassadors with the most studied magnificence; and, in the fulness of his heart, ostentatiously displayed to them the whole wealth and power of his kingdom. He "hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not."† Such an unreserved disclosure of his riches and resources to the ministers of a foreign court, might probably be an impolitic proceeding, prejudicial to the interests of his kingdom: a proceeding, therefore, which in itself was highly culpable. But it was the *spirit* by which he was actuated, that rendered the disclosure particularly sinful. In making this pompous exhibition of his treasures, he sought his own glory, and not the Lord's. Instead of giving to God the honor due unto his name, he aimed to exalt himself to augment his own importance in the eyes of his noble visitors, and to inspire them with an admiration of his wisdom and prowess; as if "his power and the might of his arm had gotten him this

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. † 2 Kings, xx. 13.

wealth." Such was the vain-glorious principle which on this occasion dictated his conduct. What was its manifest tendency? It was obviously calculated to erase every serious impression, which a recital of the wonder that had been done in the land, might have made on these heathen strangers. It was obviously calculated to confirm them in a conviction, that the kings of Judah, notwithstanding their superior pretensions to the knowledge and favor of the true God, in reality neither possessed nor avowed any better sources of protection and prosperity, than the kings of other nations enjoyed; but, like them, confided for success on their policy and their arms, on the wisdom of their counsels and the multitude of their chariots, instead of resting their dependence on the Lord Jehovah.

We here perceive the nature of Hezekiah's sin. Let us further consider how greatly his offence was aggravated by the circumstances under which it was committed. It is expressly stated that "he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him." His whole life had been an uninterrupted succession of great and distinguished mercies. "The Lord had been with him: and he had prospered whithersoever he had gone forth." But in addition to these general blessings conferred on him, he had lately experienced a most remarkable proof of the divine interposition in his favor. When afflicted with a fatal disorder, in answer to his earnest supplications, he had been wonderfully raised from the bed of sickness; had received a promise, that the space of fifteen years should be added to his days; and, for the stronger confirmation of his faith, had been favored with a miraculous sign: for at his request "the shadow had been brought backward ten degrees, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz." Suitably affected with this fresh instance of the Lord's goodness, Hezekiah in the most lively terms had testified his gratitude, and in a song of thanksgiving, expressly composed for the purpose, had declared his resolution of devoting to the Lord the residue of that life, which had thus been "delivered from the pit of corruption." Under such circumstances, after so signal a mercy vouchsafed to him: after so solemn and recent a profession of his peculiar obligations to the Almighty; on an occasion which so directly recalled these events to his memory, and so imperiously required him to give God the glory, was Hezeki-

ah's heart lifted up? How greatly does the peculiarity of his situation enhance the sinfulness of his conduct! What increasing discoveries are thus obtained of the malignant and aggravated nature of his offence!

II. I lead you to contemplate the particular view of this transaction exhibited in the text.

Hitherto we have seen only the surface of the matter. Let us now explore its secret depths. We have seen the nature and the aggravation of Hezekiah's sin. But how can we account for his transgression? The profane, the vain-glorious spirit betrayed in this part of his conduct, is directly contrary to that illustrious piety which marks his general character. We should rather have thought that the very circumstances, which so greatly increase his sin, would have operated to prevent the commission of it. Surely some adequate cause must exist for the production of so extraordinary an effect. To develop the cause, let us turn our eyes on the text. There we shall find the mystery unravelled. There we shall find the inspired writer assigning, as the immediate preparatory step to Hezekiah's Fall, that in this "business of the ambassadors, God left him." God, on this occasion, withdrew the supporting influence of his Spirit, and for a season left his servant to the efforts of his natural strength. Thus left, Hezekiah fell. Deprived of divine assistance, he speedily sullied the lustre of his former character, and became an easy prey to the machinations of that watchful enemy, who "goeth about seeking whom he may devour."—But according to this statement, do we not represent the Lord himself as the cause of Hezekiah's Fall? When we say that Hezekiah sinned in consequence of his being left by God, do we not make God the author of the sin? God forbid! "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."* Here lay the cause, the true, the sole cause of Hezekiah's sin. "He was drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." His attempt, on this occasion, to magnify himself, and to seek his own glory in preference to God's, resulted from the secret workings of pride, from the suggestions of a sinful and an idolatrous self-love.

* James, i. 13. 14.

What a striking illustration is thus incidentally presented to us of man's depravity and weakness, and of his utter inability by nature to maintain the life of faith, and communion with God! It is only by the continual supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that this life, this communion, can be preserved. Let the aid of divine grace be withdrawn, or suspended, and man's strength becomes perfect weakness. We see that this was the case with Hezekiah. No sooner did God leave him, than his "heart was lifted up." No sooner was the barrier removed, than the stream rushed with impetuosity into the channel of sin.—Let us not, however, be satisfied with merely contemplating, or even commiserating this instance of human imbecility. Let us bring home to ourselves the truth of which we are thus forcibly reminded. Let us remember, that such as Hezekiah, by nature was, such also are we. "As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."* Was Hezekiah naturally depraved and weak? So are we. Was he utterly unable of himself to persist in a course of holy obedience? So are we. In the very moment, in which God left him, did he fall? In the very moment, in which God leaves us, we must assuredly fall also.—But perhaps, you question the truth of this assertion. You entertain a more favorable opinion of your own strength than this representation will justify. You think, that though left to yourselves, you shall not certainly fall. So probably would Hezekiah have thought, had he been forewarned of his approaching danger. So Peter did think, when admonished of the temptation by which he would be speedily overcome. But we know, in the former instance, how vain such confidence would have been: we know, in the latter, how vain it actually was. On what grounds then can you indulge the hope, that your confidence would be better placed, or that your ability in the day of trial would be greater? The Scriptures, with the apparent design of utterly extinguishing every such fallacious hope, present to us the examples of some of the most eminent servants of God, not only falling, whenever they were left to themselves, but falling in those very points where we should conceive them to have been most firmly established, and least in danger of falling. Abraham, who is so highly extolled as an illustrious pattern of faith, is in two several instances

* Prov. xxvii. 19.

described as guilty of singular unbelief. Moses, the meekest man on earth, is represented, on one remarkable occasion, as "speaking unadvisedly with his lips." Did these distinguished characters fall? Surely we cannot be guilty of such presumption as to hope, that we shall stand. What evil then have we so much reason to dread and deprecate, as the withdrawing of God's preventing grace? How great need have we constantly to pray, 'O God, make clean our heart within us; and take not thy Holy Spirit from us!'

But further, while the text unfolds the cause of Hezekiah's Fall, it furnishes an additional insight into this extraordinary event. It not only teaches us, that his sin was the consequence of his being left in that particular instance to himself; but it also discloses to us the secret reasons of the divine conduct in thus permitting him for a season to be overcome. God left him "to try him;" to put his strength and piety to the proof. And for what purpose? "That he might know all that was in his heart." On comparing this expression with other passages of Scripture, in which it is used, as well as with a variety of places in which a similar language is employed, we must be led to understand it, as primarily referring to God, and spoken of Him after the manner of men. The Lord "left his servant to try him, that he might know," that by this experiment he might detect, expose and bring to light, "all that was in his heart." Was it, however, for the Lord's information that this trial was required? No. He knows what is in man, and needs not any trial to discover it to him. He had a wise and a merciful design in this dispensation. It was Hezekiah's good which the experiment was intended to promote. It was for *his* information that the disclosure was really made. To him therefore the expression may, in a secondary sense, be applied. He was on this occasion left and tried, that "he himself" might know all that was in his heart: that thus he might attain to a deeper and more humbling conviction of his own weakness and wickedness, than he had hitherto felt; and become more sensibly acquainted with the power and activity of that radical corruption, of which he had hitherto entertained a comparatively inadequate conception. Severe, indeed, was the discipline, by which this knowledge was obtained. Painful must have been the emotions of his mind, bitter his self-reproaches, when, under a sense of his

aggravated guilt, he "humbled himself for the pride of his heart." Heavy and afflicting were the judgments which he heard denounced, as the consequences of his transgression. But still the effect was doubtless salutary. So essential to our real happiness is an enlarged experience of our inherent depravity, that it is cheaply purchased at the price of even the heaviest mental sufferings. And the more we really know of our own hearts, the more we shall be convinced that it is a knowledge the most important and profitable.

Nothing but a deep sense of our natural depravity can effectually destroy our vain self-confidence, and can excite us to a diligent use of those means which are essential to our growth in grace, and to our perseverance in well-doing. Without the constant exercise of watchfulness over our hearts, and of prayer for the divine assistance, the spiritual life cannot be maintained in the soul. But by what adequate motive shall we be impelled to the discharge of these duties, without feeling the necessity of having recourse to them? What precautions shall we be induced to take against the attacks of an enemy, of whose very existence we possibly doubt; of whose power, at least, we entertain very limited notions? Let these notions, however, be corrected, and the effect will instantly appear. Let us dread the assaults of an adversary, and we shall make every preparation against him. Let us acquire an experimental knowledge of our inherent corruption, of the strength and malignity of the disorder, and the result will be obvious. We shall regard our heart with a holy jealousy, with an habitual distrust. Aware of its deceitful nature, we shall listen with suspicion to its most solemn promises, its most earnest protestations. We shall studiously examine the secret motives of our conduct. We shall sedulously avoid those places and practices which are most likely to prove a snare to us, to fan the latent spark into a flame. Especially feeling our continual need of support from above, we shall be instant in prayer for a supply of the grace that is in Christ Jesus; we shall fear to resist and grieve the Holy Spirit of God; and shall labor by all the means in our power to ensure his presence, and to promote his influence in our souls. Such it may be justly presumed, were the blessed fruits which Hezekiah derived from the increasing knowledge of the deceitfulness and dea-

perate wickedness of his heart. He would now learn to watch and pray against temptation with greater earnestness and circumspection than formerly: while the additional comfort, and the sensible progress in holiness, which must necessarily accrue from a more diligent use of the means of grace, would lead him with augmented fervor to adore that perfection of wisdom and mercy, which had thus educes good out of evil, and had graciously over-ruled his temporary Fall to the final stability of his soul.

But it is not merely in quickening our circumspection, and in exciting us to a more simple dependence on the aids of divine grace, that the advantage resulting from a knowledge of ourselves consists. In exact proportion to our views of the depravity of our heart, will be the degree of our self-condemnation and humiliation before God. Every fresh disclosure of that sin, which dwelleth in us, has a direct tendency, not only to weaken our self-confidence, but to lower our self-admiration. Nor, indeed, shall we ever effectually learn, with holy Job, to abhor ourselves, and to repent in dust and ashes, till with him we are brought to look upon ourselves as *vile*. The soul, while in a state of blindness with respect to the depth and the extent of its corruption, or possessing only very indistinct perceptions on this subject, sees nothing, or but little, of its own distance from God, and of its own worthlessness and impurity in his eyes. Consequently its self-abasement before the Majesty of Heaven is proportionally slight and transient. But when clearer views are obtained on this interesting point; when, by repeated and mortifying experience of the inherent wickedness of the heart, its entire alienation from God by nature, and its utter uncleanness in his presence, are clearly discovered; then, stript of every specious covering, and overwhelmed with a sense of its deformity, the soul sinks into nothing before God. Contrasting its own total vileness with the glorious perfections of the Almighty, with his patience and long-suffering, with his condescension, grace, and goodness, it loathes itself in its own sight, and acquiesces without a murmur in every dispensation, however painful, of the divine will. May we not reasonably conclude, that the enlarged and humiliating sense with which Hezekiah was now favored of the abominable corruption of his heart, had a considerable share in producing that exemplary resignation, which

be afterwards manifested ; when, on receiving from the prophet a denunciation of those afflicting judgments, reserved for his kingdom and his posterity, he with admirable piety exclaimed, " Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. Is it not good" (a display of signal and unmerited mercy) " if peace and truth be in my days ?"*

From the view thus presented to us in this part of the text, one conclusion forcibly presses itself on our notice. If so important in its effects, so beneficial to our best interests, is the knowledge of ourselves, how highly should we value this knowledge, how anxiously should we labor to acquire it ! While we most seriously deprecate every idea of God's leaving us to ourselves, with what earnestness should we beseech him to shew us " all that is in our heart !" Widely different however, in general, is the conduct of men. Very contrary in this respect are their sentiments to those, which the Scriptures inculcate. Far from seeking to be acquainted with the corruption of their nature, most men strive to maintain a favorable opinion of their own goodness : while others, on whom a conviction of their depravity has fastened itself too strongly to be removed, are filled with terror at this increasing knowledge of themselves, and regard it as an indication of divine wrath, and a certain presage of future misery. It may not then prove an unprofitable application of the subject, if I proceed to address the two descriptions of persons, to whom I have alluded.

1. Are there not some of you, my brethren, who firmly resist every intimation of the utter weakness and wickedness of your heart : who studiously close your eyes and shut your ears against every discovery of the sin which dwelleth in you : who will not for a moment admit any supposition, which may tend to lower you in your own estimation ? And why are you acting thus ? Because every such intimation, every such discovery, every such supposition, would undermine your present foundation, would destroy your hopes of heaven. Because, could you once be persuaded to entertain such an unfavorable opinion of your state, you would find your confidence of an interest in the divine favor overthrown. But of what kind then is your confidence ? What is your foundation ? Are you not building your hopes of heaven on some degree or measure of fancied goodness in

* 2 Kings, xx. 19.

yourselves? Such hopes, indeed, an increasing conviction of your total corruption must assuredly destroy. But are they not fallacious hopes? Is it not a blessing to be driven from so vain a confidence, from so hollow a foundation? Viewed in this light, that very conviction which you so vehemently oppose, is the remedy exactly suited to your case; the instrument fitted to work for you the most beneficial effects. Oppose it then no longer. Resist not the Holy Spirit of God, which is thus striving with you for your good. Be not afraid to know all that is in your heart. Search it; probe it to the bottom: till, thoroughly emptied of self, and abased before the Majesty of heaven, you renounce all other pleas, and cast yourselves on sovereign mercy only.

2. Are there not others among you, who, having in vain endeavored to stifle their convictions of sin, are filled with consternation and terror at the extent of their depravity? 'Our corruptions,' you cry, 'are multiplied. Every day, every hour serves only to impart to us fresh views of our evil nature. Our hearts are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest: whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Surely God has withdrawn his preventing grace from our souls. He has pronounced our doom, "No cure shall be unto thee."—Such are your fears. Such are the gloomy suggestions of your mind. But your case really warrants a very opposite conclusion: You might rather say with the wife of Manoah "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have shewed us all these things."* If he has brought you "to know all that is in your heart, it is *because* his thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace, and not of evil." To have vouchsafed to you such a discovery of your sinful nature is an intimation not of his wrath, but of his love and favor. He has revealed to you your spiritual malady. Why? Not that you may sink into despair; but that you may flee to the only Physician, who can cure the wounded spirit. He has disclosed to you the evil, which you have in yourselves, that you may be weaned from self-confidence: that you may prize more highly, and seek more earnestly his promised help: that you may be more deeply humbled, and so in due time may be more eminently exalted. Lay aside then your

* Judges, xiii. 23.

desponding thoughts. Under a lively sense of your wants, apply without delay to Christ. He knows all that is in your heart. He knew all that would be in your heart, when in the days of his flesh he said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Your case then, as it is not beyond his knowledge, so neither is it beyond his power. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him; and has declared, that those who come unto him, he will in no wise cast out."

SERMON XLVII.

The Duty of confessing Christ before Men.

MATTHEW, X. 32.

Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

IF Christianity require of its followers much painful self-denial, it also furnishes them with adequate encouragement. It is the support and the privilege of true Christians, that they serve a gracious master, who will "not forget their work and labor of love," but will mercifully accept their imperfect services, and abundantly recompense them into their bosom.

What declaration can be more animating or more consolatory, than that of our Lord in the text ! Far indeed from attempting to conceal or extenuate the difficulties attendant on a faithful adherence to his service, in the preceding part of his discourse, he had clearly represented the dangers, to which his disciples would, for his sake, be exposed. Let not this representation, however, diminish their exertions, or abate their ardor in his cause. An ample compensation for their sufferings is provided. Are they tempted to waver in their profession ? Let them steadfastly contemplate this encouraging assurance, "Whosoever shall confess me before

men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven."

The general terms, in which our Lord delivers the declaration, plainly shew, that the purport of it is not to be confined to the apostles, or to the primitive Christians, but is equally applicable to all his disciples in all ages. In discoursing therefore on these words, I shall propose three objects for our consideration.

I. The Duty specified.

II. The Difficulties with which it is attended.

III. The Promise annexed to the Discharge of it.

I. The Duty specified is *that* of "Confessing Christ before men:" a duty repeatedly enjoined in the Scripture on all, who call themselves his disciples. And the meaning of the injunction is obvious. It is not enough for the followers of Jesus to retain a *secret* attachment to his person and his service: they must openly avow their relation to him; and in the face of the world must proclaim their dependence on him, and their expectations from him. They are the subjects, the soldiers, the servants of Christ. Ought they not then publicly to own him for their king, their captain, their master? To attempt to conceal their Christian profession, to admit in the heart their obligations and their devotedness to Christ, while outwardly they exhibit no proof that they "belong to him," is in truth to deny him: to act as though they were ashamed of Him and of his Gospel.

But how is their confession to be made? St. Paul tells us, that as "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession is made unto Salvation."* The Christian must embrace every seasonable occasion of delivering his religious sentiments with firmness, with meekness, and modesty. As he is ready to give to every one that asketh, a reason of the hope that is in him; so must he be careful that "the hope" itself be clearly and explicitly declared. He must not be ashamed of confessing, whenever a proper opportunity occurs, the faith of Christ crucified: nor by a criminal silence, when circumstances demand his interference, must he either countenance others in their errors, or suffer them to retain a supposition, that his opinions coincide with their own.

* Romans, x. 10.

But the mere confession of the mouth is of itself a very defective discharge of the duty under review. Though a necessary part, it is yet the least important part, of that testimony which Christians are required to bear to Christ. It is an evidence, which to a degree may be advanced by those, who possess no other claims to the character of his people; and which, when unsupported by other less equivocal proofs, is altogether inconclusive and nugatory. To the confession of the lips must be added that of the life. The Christian by his *conduct*, as well as by his words, must evince his relation to Christ. With the view then of elucidating the subject, and of enabling you to form an accurate conception of the duty enjoined, I proceed distinctly to specify some particulars in which the discharge of it principally consists.

1. To "confess Christ before men," is to shew that we are uniformly influenced by a supreme regard to his will. All pretensions to be the subjects of Christ, while we withhold from him that *obedience*, which as subjects we owe to him, are preposterous and vain. We read of some who profess "that they know God, but in works deny him."* Our Saviour himself expostulates with such characters on the absurdity of their profession: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and *do not the things which I say?*" At the same time he states an unreserved compliance with his precepts as an infallible criterion of our attachment to him, and of our interest in his favor. "Ye are my friends, if ye *do whatsoever I command you.*"† Such then is the evidence by which the Christian testifies the sincerity of his profession. He confesses Christ before men by a conscientious and an avowed adherence to the injunctions of the Written Word. The Bible is the Statute Book, to which he uniformly appeals: the standard, to which on all occasions he desires to be conformed. Is the lawfulness or the propriety of any proposal the subject of his consideration? He deliberates not how he may best consult his own temporal ease, interest, or reputation. He enquires not what may be the opinion, or the practice of the world; but, "What say the Scriptures?" How is it written? "To the law and to the testimony." He may err in the application of his rule, but he does not wilfully desert it for another guide.

* Titus, i. 16.

† Luke, vi. 46. John, xv. 14.

See him engaged in commercial transactions. A favorable opportunity occurs of pushing his concerns with advantage. The means which would ensure success, though sanctioned by common usage, are such as the divine law forbids him to employ. Under these circumstances what course does he pursue? He does not admit a compromise between duty and interest. He does not satisfy his conscience with the wretched sophistry of Ephraim, who, while "the balances of deceit are in his hand," urges the success which attends his fraudulent proceedings, as a palliation, at least, of his injustice and oppression—"Yet I am become rich: I have found me out substance: In all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin."* With a holy elevation of mind, the Christian openly avows his disapprobation and abhorrence of the sinful practices suggested; without hesitation relinquishes the advantage connected with the adoption of them; and, unshaken by the multitude or the authority of examples, with pious Nehemiah, exclaims, "So do not I because of the fear of God."†

View him in another situation. He has sustained an injury wantonly inflicted: or his own conduct has been misunderstood; he is supposed to have intended an affront. 'The laws of honor' demand that he should retaliate the injury on the person of the offender; that he should expose his own life to the vengeance of him who deems himself affronted. Does he acquiesce in the decisions of this Anti-christian tribunal? Does he bow to the laws of honor in opposition to those of God, who has said, "Thou shalt not kill?" Far otherwise does the Christian act. He is forward and anxious to admit every concession, to recede from his just pretensions, to offer every reasonable explanation. Do these attempts at reconciliation fail? With a fortitude immensely differing from that impious temerity, which so often usurps the name of courage; with a magnanimity, which nothing but that faith, which "overcometh the world," can inspire; a magnanimity, which exposes by the strongest contrast that abject fear of man, which always drives the duelist to the combat; he steadily refuses an appeal to arms, and avows his resolution of adhering to the commandments of the Lord. His language is, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"‡

* Hosea, xiii. 8. † Nehemiah, v. 15. ‡ Gen. xxxix. 9.

On similar principles, and with equal constancy, he opposes on every occasion the pernicious doctrine of expediency: a doctrine, which claims to itself the privilege of dispensing with the divine commands, and, under the pretence of accomplishing the purposes of the Almighty, virtually rejects and disannuls his law: a doctrine which countenances the unscriptural position, that 'the end will justify the means;' which substitutes the dictates of human policy for the precepts of the Written Word. Against such abuses, against such violations of the law of Christ, the Christian solemnly enters his deliberate protest. He decidedly condemns the adoption of measures, which, although apparently calculated to produce beneficial effects, in themselves militate against the letter or the spirit of the practical rules proclaimed in the oracles of truth. He presumes not to be wise above what is written. He dares not to "do evil that good may come." He leaves it with the Lord to accomplish his secret councils. For himself he avers, that the path revealed is the path of duty.

2. To "confess Christ before men" is publicly to attest the reality of those hopes and joys which Christianity professes to inspire, and claims as peculiarly her own. It is the great glory of the Gospel that it proposes to its followers objects, transcendantly surpassing in grandeur and interest every thing of an earthly nature: at the same time that it diffuses through the soul a happiness which the world can neither give nor take away. It is part of the description of Christians, that they "rejoice in Jesus Christ."* Christ commends himself to our acceptance as "The True Riches.—The Pearl of great Price.—The hid Treasure; which when a Man has found, for joy thereof he selleth all that he hath and buyeth it." He declares that in himself there is a fulness, a sufficiency of enjoyment, which, unlike the perishable gratifications of time and sense, will neither fade nor cloy. "I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger.—Whosoever drinketh of the Water, that I shall give him, shall never thirst.—Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."† Now the Christian "confesses Christ before men,"

* Philipians, iii. 3.

† John, vi. 35. iv. 14. Isaiah, lv. 2.

by bearing witness to the truth of these declarations ; by shewing that these professions are not exaggerated ; by constraining the unbelieving world to acknowledge that he possesses a secret treasure which makes him rich indeed ? an inward source of joy, " with which a stranger intermeddleth not."

And how does he accomplish his purpose ? Not by flying to the world for his rewards and pleasures. Not by pursuing earthly things with an avidity, which can belong to those alone, who have no higher objects in their view. Not by seeking his happiness in those frivolous and unsatisfying amusements, which communicate delight only to minds unacquainted with " Christ the hope of glory." But by manifesting in these respects a *spirit* and a *conduct* directly the reverse of *that spirit* and of *that conduct*, which distinguish the children of the world.

" His treasure is not on earth." This is a truth, which his whole life exemplifies and proves. Witness his moderation and forbearance in urging his individual interests ; his enlarged and benevolent employment of the portion of goods assigned to him ; his prompt renunciation of temporal advantages at the command of conscience ; his patient contentment and cheerful resignation under disappointment and losses ; his freedom from envy and repining at the prosperity of others. Are these the marks of a mind devoted to the world ? Are they not rather the characteristics of one whose " affections are set on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God : " of one who, for a season " sojourning in a strange land, looketh for a city, which hath foundations whose maker and builder is God."

" His enjoyments are of a rational and holy nature." Where then is he to be found ? In the crowded resorts of fashionable dissipation ? In the seductive haunts of boisterous and licentious mirth ? No. The pleasures, which such scenes afford, are to him offensive and disgusting. The passions, which they tend to excite and gratify, are those which it is his unceasing toil to subdue and mortify. See him on the busy stage of public life, stemming by his exertions the tide of immorality and profaneness ; pleading the cause of the injured and oppressed ; framing and promoting plans of extended and permanent beneficence. See him in the humbler walks of private life, disseminating happiness

within his narrow sphere : assisting the distressed, ministering to the sick, consoling the afflicted. See him in the social and domestic circle, receiving and imparting useful knowledge, discoursing on the works and ways of Providence. See him in the assembly of the saints, pouring out his soul in prayer and praise. See him in his secret chamber, communing with his own heart, and holding delightful intercourse with his God. These are the enjoyments of the Christian : enjoyments which shame the trifling, sinful pleasures of the world, and show the heavenly principle which operates within.

3. To "confess Christ before men" is to manifest a decided attachment to his people. Christ has expressly taught, that his people are his representatives on earth : that there exists between him and them a communion, an identity of interests : that he regards the treatment which they encounter in the world as if it were encountered by himself. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me.—He that despiseth you, despiseth me."* Have they experienced an act of kindness, because they belong to Christ ? He declares to those, who have conferred it, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."† Are they reproached and injured for his sake ? He expostulates with him who has done the wrong, "Why persecutest thou me ?" Hence, by parity of reason, to manifest an attachment to the people of Christ, is to manifest an attachment to Christ himself : to confess *them* is to confess *Him* before men. But how does the Christian make this confession ? How does he manifest his attachment to those, who "have obtained a like precious faith" with himself ? On every occasion he avows and testifies his predilection for them. He "does good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the household of faith." Whenever an opportunity occurs, he protects their persons, espouses their interests, and vindicates their character. Far from joining with the clamorous and malignant world in exposing and magnifying their errors, he studiously draws a veil over their faults : and feeling "that he himself also is compassed with infirmity," is sparing of his censure even in respect to those parts of their conduct which he cannot altogether commend or justify. Necessity will, indeed, compel

* Matthew, x. 40. Luke, x. 16. † Matthew, xxv. 40. Acts, ix. v.

him to have frequent intercourse with them "that know not God, and obey not the Gospel." But from among what description of persons does he select his friends and favorite companions? From among such as "love the Lord Jesus in sincerity." These he esteems the truly honorable and excellent upon earth. In these he finds a spirit and a temper congenial to his own. With these he delights to associate, and with these, if such be the alternative proposed, he "chooses rather to suffer affliction, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than" the favor and applause of an ungodly world.

II. We proceed to a consideration of the difficulties attendant on the duty under review.

That such a decided and consistent testimony to Christ will be attended with difficulties, is a truth which cannot be disguised. Our Saviour, while inculcating on his disciples the duty of confessing him before men, unreservedly states the obstacles which they must encounter in the discharge of it. Persecution, in a thousand different forms, awaited them. They would be as sheep among wolves. They would be delivered up to the Councils, and scourged in the Synagogues, and hated of all men for Christ's sake. And with what exactness these predictions were fulfilled, what difficulties the apostles and primitive Christians encountered in "confessing Christ before men," history, both sacred and profane, abundantly attests. In numberless instances they resisted unto death, and were called to seal their faith with their blood. Blessed be God! from these severer trials, to which a conscientious profession of Christianity has in many ages of the church exposed the followers of Christ, we at this time are mercifully exempt. In this highly-favored country, the arm of civil power, which has been so often raised to persecute the people of the Lord, is extended for their protection. But are they therefore exempt from every trial? Do they even *here* experience no difficulty in confessing Christ before men? Far otherwise is the case. Still their fortitude and their constancy are put to many painful struggles. Still many powerful inducements are held forth to tempt them to "deny the Lord who bought them." The world, though nominally Christian, is still their adversary. The enmity, originally placed between

the seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman, though modified and restrained by outward circumstances, still secretly and powerfully operates within. The principles and the practice of the Christian so directly oppose, and in fact so pointedly condemn, the principles and the practice of the world, that no real cordiality can subsist between them. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"* Our Lord's declaration to his apostles must, from similar causes, be equally applicable to his people in this and in every age of the church. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you."† Hence result the difficulties of which we speak. Hence in a variety of ways, the world opposes and obstructs the Christian in his discharge of the duty commanded in the text.

Is he proof against the common temptations, by which other men are effectually assailed? Do riches, honors, pleasures, in vain attempt to shake his constancy? More formidable weapons are prepared. More dangerous enemies are stirred up to the assault. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."‡ The authority, the influence, the importunity of friends, are not seldom employed to divert the Christian from his purpose, and to betray him into actions unbecoming his profession. Severe at times is the conflict in his bosom, when the wishes of a parent, or the requests of a benefactor militate against the commands of God: when the intreaties of a wife, or the inclinations of a child, cannot be indulged without doing violence to the dictates of conscience, and to the obligations of duty. In such circumstances steadily to maintain his adherence to Christ, to resist the solicitations of those, whom he reveres and loves, while such resistance cannot fail to expose him to the charge of disobedience, of ingratitude, or of unkindness, constitutes a difficulty of no ordinary magnitude: a difficulty which it requires no small degree of resolution and perseverance to surmount.

Ridicule is another powerful weapon, with which the world attacks the Christian. If it be restrained from more direct and violent hostility, it will endeavor to laugh and

* 2 Cor. vi. 14. † John, xv. 19. ‡ Matthew, x. 36.

shame him out of his religious constancy. It is predicted, that "there should be mockers in the last time."* And the Christian feels the truth of the prediction. He feels that in confessing Christ before men, he must encounter derision and contempt. He must often witness the half-stifled laugh, and must brave the sarcastic sneer. He must submit to be branded with opprobrious names, and to be accounted a fool for Christ's sake. And are these things easy to be borne? Is there no difficulty in persisting in a conduct which entails such consequences? Among that noble army of saints and martyrs, recorded as illustrious examples of the power of faith, those who endured the "trial of cruel mockings"† are specifically mentioned.

With the shafts of calumny also the disciple of Christ must be prepared to contend. Like to his blessed master, he is "a sign which shall be spoken against.—If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household."‡ If the world misrepresented Christ's words and conduct; traduced his character; imputed to him evil motives; and put a false construction on his actions; can his disciples hope to escape treatment, equally injurious? Such treatment, in a greater or a less degree, they do encounter. Let them "live godly in Christ Jesus," and in the calumnies cast on them they experience the hatred of the world. Their conscientious adherence to the word of God is styled *needless preciseness*; their moderation in the pursuit of worldly things, *hypocrisy*; their enlarged benevolence in the use of them, *ostentation*. Their indifference to worldly pleasures is represented as the effect of a morose, an unsocial disposition. Their meekness and forbearance under injuries are described as resulting from meanness of soul, and from a deficiency of proper spirit and pride: while their professed predilection and attachment to the people of Christ are adduced as the certain indications of a narrow and illiberal mind; the dictates of party zeal, of a secret and mischievous ambition. Amidst such uncharitable insinuations and malevolent suggestions, does the Christian experience no difficulty in "confessing Christ before men?" Let those who have made the trial be consulted. They will tell you that these things cost them many painful struggles, and form

* Jude, 15. † Heb. xi. 36. ‡ Luke, ii. 34. Matt. x. 25.

a very considerable portion of that cross which they are called to bear.

III. From the view of the Duty in question and of the difficulties with which it is attended, let us advert to the Promise annexed to the discharge of it.

The duty is arduous, but great is the encouragement proposed. Christ declares, "Whosoever confesses me before men, him will I confess before my Father, which is in heaven." Those who acknowledge Christ for their Lord, shall be acknowledged by Him as his people. As they sow, so shall they reap. They avow their relation to Him, and in return He will avow his relation to them. Let every particular of this gracious and animated declaration be attentively considered and profitably applied.

Christ will confess his people. In contemplating this promise, remember it is *not* said that he will confess them "before men." No intimation is given that they shall be specially distinguished *on earth* by striking interpositions of Providence, by open and unequivocal marks of divine favor. No stipulation is conveyed that Christ will appear for them "in this world," will vindicate their character, will rescue them out of the hands of their enemies. They may live and die in poverty, in obscurity, neglected, derided, persecuted. Inward peace and consolation, indeed, they shall abundantly enjoy : but so far as outward things are concerned, instead of being *confessed* by Christ, they may occasionally seem to be even denied and forgotten by him. Mark, however, his assertion, 'I *will* confess them.' Where ? "Before my Father, which is in heaven." While they are patiently confessing Christ upon earth, he is graciously confessing them in heaven. There, in the presence of his Father, he appears for them : he recognizes them for his own : he pleads their cause, and, notwithstanding their remaining infirmity and defilement, is not ashamed to call them brethren. What a constraining motive to patient continuance in well-doing, what consolation under all their trials does this reflection administer ! Their self-denying confession of Christ before men, their steady adherence to his cause in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, is not overlooked. He notices, approves, and owns them for his people : graves them on the palms of his hands ; and

by his almighty, though invisible arm, is causing all things to work together for their good.

But it is not to the testimony which he is *now* giving in their favor, that the promise either exclusively, or even principally refers. There is a *future* period approaching, when it will be more directly and signally fulfilled. There is a day fixed in the counsels of the Divine Wisdom, "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," when the dead, small and great shall stand before his tribunal, and shall be judged according to the things which they have done in the body. In that day will the declaration in the text be illustriously accomplished. In that day will Christ stand forth the champion, the protector, the vindicator of his people. Then will he claim them for his own, and will publicly assert their relation to him. They have honored him by confessing him before men; then will he honor them by confessing them before the Father, before the holy angels, before the assembled universe. 'These,' will he cry, (pointing to that happy flock, whom he will have separated from the herd of the ungodly,) 'These are mine. They proved themselves to be mine on earth. I now declare and acknowledge them to be mine in the face of the whole heaven. These are they, who, from the time when they were led to profess themselves my servants, bore a decided and consistent testimony to my name. Their attachment to my service, the world accounted folly and hypocrisy; and gratified its enmity against me by hating and opposing these my brethren. But "none of these things moved them; neither counted they their lives dear, so that they might finish their course with joy." For my sake they "endured the cross, despising the shame." For my sake they bore the contradiction of sinners. Long did I in secret witness their patient sufferings, their unremitted labors. But the time is come, when I will reward them openly. They have been faithful unto death, therefore shall they receive a crown of life. Many accusations have their enemies preferred against them. But I absolve them from every charge. I acknowledge them to be my people, my chosen, my redeemed. Washed in my blood from every stain of sin, clothed in the white garments of my righteousness, perfectly renewed to my image, they shall now ascend with me to my Father, and their Father, and shall be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.'

My brethren, what at that moment will be the experience of those blessed spirits ! Thus publicly justified, recognized, confessed by their glorious God and Saviour, what will be the emotions of their soul ! In what light will they then regard those trials, which they have endured on earth ! With what sentiments will they then look back on those difficulties which they have here encountered in confessing Christ before men ! Compared with the gracious recompense, so rich, so vast, beyond their utmost thoughts, will they not deem their past afflictions light ? If shame and grief can at that glorious hour find admission into their happy bosom, will they not be ashamed at the recollection of their worthless services ? Will they not grieve at the remembrance of that defective, indecisive testimony which they have borne to their heavenly master ? How strange will it then appear to them that they could ever, for a moment, have been tempted to distrust his love and goodness ! What madness will it seem that they should ever have entertained a thought of avoiding the cross, or for an instant have been induced to swerve from their duty by the threatenings and opposition of the world !

What, also, at the moment of which I am speaking, will be the feelings of *that* world : of that world which has been the enemy of the cross of Christ ; which has hated and persecuted his people ! How will the profane and the ungodly be troubled when the righteous man, whom they despised and afflicted on earth, shall be thus acknowledged and honored by Christ in their presence : How will they be “ amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for ! ” What bitter confessions will then be wrung from their lips ? “ This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints ! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth.—As for the way of the Lord, we have not known it.”*

Would God ! my brethren, that you and all men now viewed these things in the same light, in which you will view them in that day ! Will Religion then appear to have been the only true wisdom ? Deem it not folly and madness

* Wisdom of Solomon, v. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

now. Will you then be convinced of the happiness, and long to share the portion of those, who in their lives have confessed Christ before men? Join yourselves *now* to their number. In your own lives confess Christ before men. On the other hand, will the difficulties attendant on such a confession then appear to have been so disproportionate to the glorious reward? Be not intimidated at the prospect of them now. Regard the trials, to which you are called, as so many favorable opportunities of evincing your attachment and fidelity to your heavenly Master. Be patient. Be steadfast. Look forward to "the end of your faith." When tempted to desert your post, or to deny your profession, reflect on the blessedness of hearing these words addressed to you, 'You have confessed me before men: I will confess you before my Father, which is in heaven.'

SERMON XLVIII.

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The advantages of Godliness, as to the Present Life.

1 TIMOTHY, iv. 8.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having Promise of the Life that now is.

IT is to be feared that, in all ages of the Church, there have existed persons ready to adopt the language of those impious scoffers who exclaimed, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?"* Even many, who would be shocked at the open and unqualified profaneness of this sentiment, yet, in a limited sense, entertain the sentiment itself. If they admit, that the service of God is attended with advantage in respect to "the life which is to come," yet they cannot be induced to make the same concession in its favor with respect to "the life that now is." 'Here, at least,' they will contend, 'so far as this world is concerned, it must be con-

* Malachi, iii. 14.

nessed that religion is a discouraging and an unprofitable pursuit.'

But the word of God, and the testimony of good men, alike contradict the assertion. In opposition to it, the apostle Paul pronounces, that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is." Religion is not only our duty, but our *interest* : and our interest, not only in relation to our future prospects, but in reference to our present enjoyments. The godly man, far from being a loser, even in this world is a gainer by his religion. He has a glorious portion reserved for him in the heavens. But on earth also he feels the benefit of his godly life and conversation : and from his own experience can confidently affirm, that "he doth not fear God for naught."

Among you, my brethren, I trust that not a single person would be found, who for a moment could seriously suppose, that it shall not "finally be well with them that fear God." All, though their life may not correspond with the conviction, must yet in their minds be convinced, that "Godliness has promise of the life which is to come." Possibly, however, there may be some, who, from ignorance or misapprehension, distrust the other part of the apostle's declaration : some who can scarcely be persuaded to believe that "Godliness has promise of the life that now is." It is for the satisfaction of such persons that the present discourse shall be framed. With the view of leading them to just conclusions on this important subject,

I. I shall distinctly explain the declaration, "Godliness has promise of the life that now is."

II. I shall confirm and illustrate its truth.

I. In entering on the proposed explanation, let us begin with directing our inquiries into the meaning of the term, *Godliness*. What is Godliness?

Godliness, in general, may be understood to imply those dispositions, and that conduct, which the perfections of God, and our relation to him, as intelligent creatures require. In this sense, the term will include a reverential awe of his majesty and holiness ; a constant regard to his authority and to his precepts ; an earnest desire of living to his glory ; an entire devotedness to his will ; an unshaken reliance on his wisdom, his power, his goodness, and his truth. The godly man is one, who, in the language of Scripture, "has

the fear of God before his eyes : who is habitually influenced by religious motives, and regulates his practice by the divine commands.

Such is a general description of Godliness. But to obtain larger and more distinct conceptions of the meaning of this term, we must descend farther into particulars : we must advert to it as applicable to man in his present fallen and guilty state. Men, both by nature and by practice, are sinners : and, as such, they can enjoy no substantial peace with God, they can exercise no real confidence in his perfections. Far from loving God and desiring his glory, the more they discover of the divine character, the more they dread and hate it. Far from cordially devoting themselves to the will and to the service of God, they follow their own will, and prefer the service of sin. It is only by *grace* that they can be delivered from this state. It is only by *faith* in the atoning blood of Jesus, that the guilt of sin can be removed, and a reconciliation between God and sinners can be accomplished. It is only by a sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, and by the renewing influences of the Spirit, that the soul can be effectually drawn to love to God, and to delight in his ways.—Hence it appears that the term Godliness, when applied to man, includes many additional and important particulars, which the precise meaning of the word may not at first sight suggest. It implies a deep conviction of guilt and misery ; a cordial acquiescence in the revealed method of Salvation ; a firm persuasion of the truth of God's promises through Jesus Christ ; an humble dependence on those promises for acceptance with God ; a sincere attachment to the Written Word, in which those promises are disclosed ; a constant reliance on the aid of divine grace ; a diligent use of the means appointed for the supply and the increase of that grace ; and an earnest and unremitted endeavor to follow, in the whole life and conversation, that perfect pattern of all goodness, which the Son of God exhibited on earth.—This is Godliness. This is that holy disposition of heart ; that blessed combination of faith, of hope, and of love ; concerning which the apostle declares, that it “ has promise of the life that now is.” What does this declaration import ?

It does not import that Godliness will ensure to its followers the possession and enjoyment of worldly prosperity :

that it will certainly invest them with authority, exalt them to eminence, or crown them with affluence. Godliness has no specific promise of this nature. It has no specific promise of worldly good. It does not engage to make its votaries rich or great, or noble in this life; to secure them from the losses, the disappointments, and the calamities, to which the ungodly are liable; to preclude even the inconveniences and hardships, which a state of indigence entails. Nay, on many occasions, Godliness, far from advancing a man's temporal interests, decidedly opposes them: far from assisting him in the attainment of worldly advantages, peremptorily commands him to relinquish them; instead of procuring to him the favor and applause of his fellow-creatures, exposes him to shame, to reproach, and to persecution.

Neither does "the promise of the life that now is," include an exemption from afflictive dispensations. It does not imply that the godly man shall be freed from those personal and domestic evils, to which others are subject. It does not imply that he shall be protected from the ravages of time and sickness: that he shall not sink under the weight of declining years, nor experience the increasing infirmities of age: that he shall *literally* be shielded against "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," and against "the destruction that wasteth at noon-day:" that he shall never have reason to complain of the unkindness, the ingratitude, or the treachery of friends: that he shall never be summoned to weep over the untimely tomb of a beloved relative: that he shall uniformly be spared the anguish of witnessing the sufferings, perhaps even the crimes of those, to whom his soul is knit by the most endearing ties. History and experience unite in opposing such an interpretation. The examples of Jacob, of Job, and of David, strikingly proclaim that "many are the afflictions of the righteous:" that the godly, far from being exempt from ordinary troubles, are frequently visited with trials of even superior magnitude, and "must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

What then is the import of the apostle's declaration? If Godliness ensures not the attainment of worldly prosperity; if it enjoys not an exemption from afflictive dispensations; in what respects has it the promise of the life that now is? What is the meaning of this expression? The meaning is,

that the tendency of Godliness is to promote and augment the happiness of its followers in this world ; that the godly man, whatever may be his outward circumstances, possesses a source of more real and more permanent felicity, than an ungodly man, under the same, or under different circumstances, can possibly possess : that the service of God, if considered only in relation to the temporal comforts, to the present enjoyments of all who cordially embrace it, claims a decided, an unrivalled superiority over the service of sin : that, in the beautiful and expressive language of inspiration, the " ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."*

Such is the meaning of the declaration under review.

II. I proceed to confirm and illustrate the Truth of this declaration.

That the tendency of Godliness is to promote and augment the happiness of its followers in this world, is a proposition which rests not merely on assertion. It is a proposition capable of proof. Appeal might, with confidence, be made to the testimony of those who are best qualified to decide the question. Where, it may be asked, is the man, who, having made trial of the ways of Godliness, hath not found them to be ways of pleasantness and peace? What numbers, who for years have trodden the paths of sin, and without restraint have participated in all the pleasures, which ungodliness can yield, have at length been compelled to own, that till they were acquainted with genuine religion, they were strangers to real happiness? Striking indeed are the attestations in favor of a godly life, which the reluctant confessions of its most inveterate enemies have frequently adduced. Such, however, are not the proofs on which I purpose to ground the confirmation of this proof. I shall endeavor to shew you that from the nature of things, Godliness must tend to increase the happiness of its followers. I will set before you two leading particulars, in which this tendency is manifestly displayed.

I. Godliness delivers those who cordially embrace it from many sources of disquietude, to which ungodly men are subject.

What a prevailing, what a prolific source of disquietude is a covetous, an envious, a repining temper! To this temper, however, all men are, in some measure, naturally

prone : for pride and selfishness are deeply rooted in every heart. To see others, whom we deem at least our equals, perhaps our inferiors, in merit and pretensions, preferred before us ; treated with greater respect or indulgence than ourselves ; enjoying advantages, which we possess not ; or admitted to privileges, from which we are excluded ;—to see them commended, admired, extolled ; while we are overlooked, defamed, degraded ;—to see them rioting in ease and plenty, experiencing no want, and gratifying every inclination ; while we are constrained to struggle with adversity, to endure many painful deprivations, and perhaps even to pine in indigence ;—what jealousies, what hatred, what discontent and murmuring, do sights of this nature foment and nourish in the mind ! And can happiness reside in a mind where such passions are fomented and nourished ? Must not the bosom, while tortured with wounded pride, with disappointed hopes, or with rankling envy, be a stranger to inward peace ? Look at the wretched Haman. Not “ the glory of his riches, *not* the multitude of his children, *not* all the things wherein the King had promoted him,” could yield him tranquillity and happiness. Harken to his own confession. “ All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King’s gate.”*—But from this cause of disquietude Godliness sets its followers free. It teaches them in whatever state they are, therewith to be content. It lays the axe to the root of the tree. It strikes at the bottom of all those carnal and selfish principles which agitate and torment the natural heart. Religion, by discovering to the godly man the *true* value of worldly objects, diminishes and moderates his desire after them. Convinced that his “ life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,” he is no longer disposed to covet the possession of earthly treasures and distinctions, nor, consequently, to envy those who do possess them. Taught to see and to know himself a sinner, he ceases to entertain high notions of his own pretensions. Far from thinking that the blessings conferred on him are less than his deserts, he is conscious that he has not been rewarded according to his iniquities. He feels it to be “ of the Lord’s mercy that *he* is not consumed.” Shall he then quarrel with the divine dispensations ? Shall he arraign the ways

* Esther, v. 13.

of Providence, or murmur at that distribution which the Almighty is pleased to make of his temporal gifts? Widely different are his sentiments. His language is, 'It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good. He has dealt mercifully with me. He has bestowed on me true riches and honor. Shall I be disquieted about the perishable riches and honors of the world? Hath not God a right to assign to me such a portion of earthly things as his wisdom sees to be best? Am I not assured that he will assign to me such a portion as will eventually be most conducive to his glory and to my good? Let his will be done, and his will shall be *mine*.'

It must be evident to all, that a heart which speaks this language, enjoys a sweet serenity which the covetous, the envious, the discontented bosom can never know.

Advert to another prevailing cause of much disquietude, the fear of future evil. It may be safely affirmed, that a very large proportion of the sorrows of life results not from sufferings which are actually endured, but from the apprehension of those which may be endured hereafter. What is the subject of one man's lamentation? 'Though my affairs are now in a prosperous condition, yet what security do I possess that a sad reverse may not one day take place? It is true that at present I am free from want; but this may not always be the case. So long indeed as health and strength are continued to me, I may hope to procure a comfortable support. But what will be my situation, when these means of subsistence shall fail? Sickness may suddenly deprive me of the power of maintaining myself and my family: or if I should escape this calamity; if I should not be disabled by immature disease, yet old age will at length surely arrive, and will render me incapable of labor. How shall I then sustain increasing infirmities, poverty, and sickness?' What is the language of another? 'Hitherto my children have proved to me an unfailing source of consolation and delight. I see in them every qualification, which can rejoice or gratify a parent's heart. But my present satisfaction in contemplating them is greatly interrupted by many anxious fears, many gloomy forebodings on their account. Who can tell what unforeseen afflictions they may be doomed hereafter to encounter? Who can tell how many tears and groans they may hereafter cost me? I may live

to behold them the victims of pain, of poverty, of infamy, of death : or I may be taken from them, and thus may be compelled to leave them fatherless and friendless in the midst of a cruel and ensnaring world.' Let me appeal to numbers, whether alarms of this nature do not occasionally intrude into their bosoms, and embitter many of their present comforts. But from such alarms Godliness delivers those who cordially embrace it. It does not indeed render them insensible to the changes and calamities, to which in this uncertain life they are exposed ; but it furnishes them with an adequate defence against the overwhelming fear of future evils. Religion both teaches and enables its followers to believe, that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without their Father ; that the Lord careth for the righteous ; that all things work together for good to them that love God." Supported by these assurances, the godly man can look forward without dismay. "He is not afraid of evil tidings : his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." His mind is kept in perfect peace, because it is staid on God." Should sufferings be prepared for him ; he trusts that when they arrive, sufficient strength will be imparted to bear them. Should trials be approaching, he consoles himself with the promise, that, with the temptation, a way of escape will be opened. He is aware that poverty and distress may come upon him ; and he endeavors, by all possible and lawful means, to prevent or frustrate their attacks. But, having used these precautions, he is not disquieted concerning their success. He leaves events with God. "He takes no (*anxious*) thought for the morrow." He imposes not on the present day a burden which does not belong to it. 'The same merciful hand,' he exclaims, 'which has fed and clothed me to day, will feed and clothe me to-morrow. I know whom I have believed ; and am not afraid to confide in his power and faithfulness. I am not afraid of entrusting my temporal concerns with Him, to whose care I have committed my eternal interests. He, who has undertaken to save my immortal soul, will provide for the support of my perishing body. He, who has reserved a place for me in heaven, will not suffer me to want any thing that is really good by the way. I repose all things in his hands. My soul, my body, my children, my worldly affairs, are safe under his protection. I rely on his gracious declara-

tion, that 'He will never leave me nor forsake me.' Need I ask, whether a mind thus freed from gloomy and distressing fears, does not experience a composure, and a delight peculiarly its own?

A third cause of great disquietude to which human nature is incident, is the prospect of death. Nothing is more evident than that death is a subject highly distasteful to men. They love not to hear of death, to talk of death, to think of death. They have recourse to numberless expedients, that they may banish the thoughts of death from their mind. Does the idea occasionally obtrude? They instantly dismiss it, "Go thy way for this time; when we have a more convenient season, we will call for thee." Are they occasionally constrained to remember and acknowledge the uncertain tenure of their own existence? They speedily labor to forget it. 'Why should we be tormented before our time? Why should we cast a gloom over the present scene by anticipating the dreary prospect of dissolution?' In this manner men feel and argue. They dread death as an enemy, from whose iron grasp they would, if it were possible, gladly escape; and thus, "through the fear of death are all their life-time subject to bondage."—But from this cause also of disquietude, Godliness emancipates its followers. One express object of Christ's coming in the flesh was to deliver his people from this wretched bondage. And they are delivered from it. Die indeed they must, as well as others. This debt to sin they are not exempted from discharging. But death to them has lost its terrors. Though still exposed to the *stroke*, they are freed from the *dread* of death. Enabled to look forward with hope *beyond* the grave, they can look *upon* it without dismay. Christ has disarmed death of its sting. Why then should they be afraid to encounter this vanquished enemy? Death is to them the messenger of peace and joy: the messenger which is sent to terminate every trial, to wipe away all tears from their eyes, to transport them to the blessed mansions of their heavenly Father. Why then should they tremble at its approach? Securely can they trust the time, the mode, the circumstances of their departure out of life to Him, who has destroyed death, and has promised that when his people pass through the waters, He will be with them. What is their language? "Yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of

death, we will fear no evil : for thou art with us ; thy rod and thy staff they shall comfort us."

Behold another proof of that superior happiness, which Godliness vindicates to herself.

2. But Godliness not only delivers its followers from many causes of disquietude, to which ungodly men are subject : it opens also a source of positive enjoyment, from which others are totally excluded. How unsatisfying are the pleasures of the world, how delusive are the gratifications of sin, compared with that full and substantial happiness, which the people of God experience in religion ! They have *Communion* with God. They have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Reconciled to God by the blood of Christ, pardoned, justified, accepted, in the Beloved, they have access with confidence to the throne of grace. Inconceivable is the delight which flows to them from this privilege. God they contemplate as a Father, who tenderly loves, pities, and supports them : who with anxious solicitude watches over their interests, and attends even to the minutest circumstances, in which their felicity or their safety is involved. Hence the daily blessings, which in common with others they receive, assume to them the form of special mercies. The food by which they are sustained, the raiment which they wear, the air which they breathe, are gifts not only received with thankfulness, but sweetened by the recollection of the gracious and bountiful Benefactor.—They set the Lord always before them. In the works of nature, in the events of Providence, while they acknowledge and adore the hand of God, they feel an inward complacency resulting from a sense of the relation which they bear to Him, the Almighty Creator, Governor, and Controller of the Universe.—They walk with God. Are they visited with afflictions ? They have a Friend, to whom, without restraint or fear, they can pour out the sorrows of their heart. Have they reason to rejoice ? They abound in praise and gratitude : and thus expressing the devout affections of their soul, receive a tenfold increase of happiness. " Filled with all peace and joy in believing, they abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."—But in vain do we attempt by language to convey an adequate conception of the enjoyment which the godly man possesses. In order to be known, it must be felt. It is that " secret of the Lord which is

with them that fear him :” that “ peace of God, which passeth all understanding :” that “ hidden joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not :” that blessed effect of the inward abiding of the Comforter, “ even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”

Such are some of the proofs which confirm the proposition in the text, that “ Godliness has promise of the life that now is.”

What, my brethren, are your conclusions on the subject ? Hitherto you have deemed religion, so far as this world is concerned, a discouraging, an unprofitable pursuit. You have been accustomed to look upon the godly man as suffering at least considerable deductions from his present happiness, as sacrificing a large proportion of ease, of comfort, of enjoyment in “ the life that now is.” You have habitually associated in your mind the idea of Godliness with that of melancholy and gloom. Has the discussion tended to convince you that such an association is unwarranted and incongruous ? Do you now perceive that your former sentiments originated in ignorance and error ? Do you now perceive that, even in respect to this world, Godliness is gain ? May such, at this moment, be your views on this interesting point ! For surely with such views you cannot continue in an ungodly state. Convinced that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness and peace, you cannot but wish to share that pleasantness, to taste that peace. The pleasures of sin indeed must be renounced, before you can experience the delights of Godliness. But who would not willingly relinquish tumultuous and unsatisfying joys, for calm and solid happiness ? Who would not willingly relinquish the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, and which leave a deadly sting behind, for the pleasures of religion, which never fail nor cloy ; pleasures, which death, instead of terminating, inconceivably augments. For be it remembered, that Godliness has promise, not only of the life that now is, but “ of that also which is to come.” In this sense it may be pre-eminently said, that “ Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.” My brethren, make these riches your own. Appropriate this honor to yourselves. Seek heavenly wisdom ; and you shall find that “ the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize

of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." Be godly ; and you shall participate in all that happiness which Godliness confers.

Recollect, however, what is the nature of Godliness. Recollect that the Godliness to which the promises are given, is not merely a persuasion, not merely an acknowledgment, of the power and the providence of God ; not merely a profession of dependence on that power and that providence. No. It is Christianity. It is faith in Jesus. It is the hope of the Gospel. It is love, the fruit of faith. Recollect, that this Godliness, both in its *commencement* and in its *progress*, is the gift and work of the Holy Spirit of God. Recollect, that the *foundation* of this Godliness must be laid in a deep conviction of sin, in an utter renunciation of every self-righteous plea, in a cordial acquiescence in the revealed method of salvation. Recollect that the *evidence* of this Godliness consists in a life of holiness, in a faithful discharge of every duty, in the unwearied exercise of purity, of patience, of self-denial, of disinterestedness, of all those heavenly tempers and affections, which *shone* so illustriously in Christ, and distinguish and adorn his true people on earth.

If such be not the nature of your Godliness, think not to experience an interest in the promise. Some of you, perhaps, who assume the profession of religion, complain that you have been deceived in the expectations which you have been induced to form ; that you find not in the ways of Godliness, that happiness which you had hoped to find. But let me inquire, Is not the cause of this disappointment in yourselves ? Are you not seeking to enjoy the privileges, while you neglect the *duties* of religion ? Are not you careless in improving the means of grace ? are not you remiss in private prayer ? Is not your conduct inconsistent with your professions ? In the pursuit and the employment of worldly things, do not you too nearly resemble the openly irreligious and ungodly ? If this be the case, cease to wonder, cease to complain, that you are strangers to the comforts of religion. Would you taste these comforts, arise and trim your lamps. Cast off your sloth and negligence. Deny and mortify your worldly spirit. " Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. Thus shall you partake of the consolations of the Gospel. Thus prac-

tically choosing the Lord for your Portion, you shall find him, both in the life that now is, as well as in that which is to come, your exceeding great Reward.

SERMON XLIX.

Earnestness in Religion, recommended and Enforced.

LUKE, xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

THERE is in the human mind a strong propensity to indulge in unprofitable speculation : while in nothing men more clearly betray this propensity, than in their presumptuous attempts to penetrate into those mysteries, which the Divine Wisdom has thought fit to veil in obscurity. Such criminal curiosity the Scriptures in the most decided manner discourage and reprove. They teach us, that our true interest, no less than our duty, consists, not in prying into things which are purposely hidden from our eyes, but in converting to a proper use and a practical improvement, those truths which the Almighty has been pleased to disclose. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*

The text when viewed in connection with the circumstances which introduced it, illustrates these remarks. As our Saviour was “going through the cities and villages teaching,” a certain person proposed to him a question, respecting the number of those who should finally be admitted to heaven : “Lord, are there few that be saved ?” Jesus, who saw what was in man, knew that this question was the dictate of a vain and curious mind. He therefore made no direct reply. Desirous however of correcting the spirit

* Deut. xxix. 29,

which suggested the inquiry, as also of improving the opportunity for the benefit, not only of the person concerned, but of all who were standing around, he audibly delivered this striking and solemn admonition : " Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." ' Suppress all idle speculations on subjects, from which no profit can be derived : subjects, in which you possess no real interest. Instead of indulging a foolish curiosity with respect to the final condition of others, make your own calling and election sure. Whether the number of those, who shall eventually be saved, be great or small, see that you yourselves are included in that number. Let this be your grand, your primary concern. For the attainment of this end let all diligence be exercised ; let every nerve be strained. The salvation of the soul is a work, the accomplishment of which is opposed by formidable difficulties, and must be effected by incessant labor. Hither then let your most strenuous efforts be directed. Remit not your exertions ; lest you should ultimately be disappointed of your hope ; and should be found among that numerous, company who, notwithstanding their desires and endeavors after heaven, will be finally excluded from it.'

Such was the occasion and the substance of this awful admonition. But the admonition is not less reasonable now, than it was then. The instruction conveyed in it, is not less important, less necessary to us, than it was to the persons, to whom it was originally addressed. Equally formidable are the difficulties, which still obstruct the entrance into heaven. Equally great is the danger of disappointment in this arduous attempt. Equally imperious is the necessity of giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure. On these grounds I shall apply the passage to ourselves. *What* our Lord on this occasion said to the Jews, who were present, " he says unto all.—Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

In discoursing on these words with a view to elucidate the meaning and the importance of the admonition, I shall propose for discussion two particulars suggested by the text,

I. The Difficulties, which obstruct the Entrance into Heaven.

II. The Causes of that Disappointment, which many in the momentous concern of their Soul will experience.

I. An object, when viewed under different aspects assumes different hues, and presents itself in different forms. Hence it occurs, that the descriptions of the same object may sometimes vary considerably from each other, and occasionally may even involve seeming inconsistencies and contradictions. Such is the case with respect to the revealed way of salvation. On the one hand, it is set forth as a way narrow and intricate; difficult of access, replete with obstacles: a way, which requires in all who enter on it, unceasing exertion, circumspection, and fortitude. On the other hand, it is described as a way, easy to be found, free and open to all: an *high-way*, so plain and direct, that "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein:" a way, in which we may walk secure from fear and danger; a way of pleasantness and peace. How can we account for representations apparently so inconsistent and contradictory? Do they result from a statement, on either side false or exaggerated? No. They are occasioned by the different aspects under which the subject is contemplated. Viewed in connection with the rich and comprehensive offers of the Gospel, with its gracious and encouraging promises, with the adequate provision made for the spiritual support, direction, and consolation of all its followers, the way of salvation may justly lay claim to the cheerful and inviting character assigned to it: while considered merely in reference to the arduous duties which it prescribes, and to the natural indisposition and inability of man for discharging them, it no less justly warrants the gloomy and forbidding colors, in which it is occasionally depicted.

Such are the colors in which it is depicted in the text. Our Lord denominates the way of salvation "The Strait Gate:" an expression, which plainly intimates the formidable difficulties that obstruct the entrance into heaven. Let the nature of these difficulties be investigated. From what source do they principally originate? From the humbling and holy tendency of the Gospel, so repugnant to the proud and carnal heart of man.

The Gospel directly opposes human pride. It pours contempt on the lofty pretensions of human wisdom and human merit. It proclaims to man, that with all his boasted excellence, and fancied superiority, he is nothing: that until he has felt and confessed himself to be nothing, he cannot

even have entered on the way of salvation. The Gospel commands him to renounce his own righteousness; to receive eternal life as a gift freely bestowed, wholly unmerited. It directs him to become a fool, that he may be wise. It assures him, that "except he be converted and become as a little child, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven: that except he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These are declarations highly offensive to human pride: declarations, which in no small degree contribute to narrow and obstruct the entrance into heaven. Nay to the natural man, the very simplicity of the method of salvation revealed in the Gospel, constitutes an obstacle in his way. He cannot submit to make trial of means, which seem to him so futile and inadequate, and accord so little with his carnal prejudices. When Naaman the leper, Captain of the host of the King of Syria, "came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of Elisha;" the prophet "sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee and thou shalt be clean."* How was the direction received? With disgust and indignation. Naaman, forgetful of his loathsome and degraded condition, and elated with pride and self-importance, had been painting to his imagination the splendid and respectful manner, in which he had trusted the cure would have been wrought. "Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place; and recover the leper." Such a method of accomplishing the cure would in his views have been consistent with his dignity, and adapted to the occasion. But to dip himself seven times in Jordan, to wash and be clean, was a mode of relief wholly unsuited to his rank, and too simple to be attended with efficacy. "So he turned and went away in a rage."—Behold a lively representation of the natural man. "Bid him do some great thing:" propose to him to seek salvation by some scheme of human invention; some scheme which will at once flatter his pride and gratify his self-importance, and he will readily accede to the proposal. But "Believe and Live.—Look unto Christ and be saved:"—this is a direction, which appears to him foolishness: a direction, neither suited to the case, nor becoming his dignity.

* 2 Kings, v. 9, 10.

ty : a direction, which either incurs his ridicule or provokes his wrath.

But while the Gospel is humbling, it is also *holy* in its tendency. It is a doctrine according to godliness. The man who would enter in at "the Strait Gate," must divest himself not only of pride, but of all sin. "Cleansing himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, he must perfect holiness in the fear of God." Into the new Jerusalem, "there shall in no wise enter any thing, that defileth ; neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.— Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."* One sin allowedly practised excludes the sinner from heaven. Were the case not thus ; were all men permitted to indulge one favorite sin, without forfeiting their title to salvation ; could Balaam participate in the wages of unrighteousness, and yet die the death of the righteous ; could Herod refuse to put away Herodias, and yet escape the censure of the Baptist ; then would the entrance into heaven be easy : then would the gate be wide. But let such suppositions be instantly dismissed. The gate is strait. The Gospel prescribes universal holiness, it accepts no compromise for sin : it admits no exceptions : it allows no reserves. Hence results another of the difficulties in question. Men naturally love sin. Do they experience then no difficulty in parting with it ? Do they experience no difficulty in dying unto sin and living unto righteousness ; in crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts ; in mortifying their members, which are upon earth ; in denying themselves ; in taking up their cross ; in cutting off a right hand ; in plucking out a right eye ? These are painful operations : operations, which directly thwart the evil propensities of the natural heart ; and fully justify the representation given in the text.

II. I advert to the causes of that disappointment, which many in the momentous concern of their soul will experience.

Most awful is the truth here submitted to our view. "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." They shall *desire*, they shall *endeavor* to procure admission

* 2 Cor. vii. 1. Rev. xxi. 27. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

into the kingdom of heaven. But their desires shall be fruitless, their endeavors ineffectual. After all their attempts they shall for ever be excluded from the mansions of the blessed. Are we staggered at this declaration? It is the declaration of Christ himself, delivered in a manner peculiarly solemn and impressive. "Many, I say unto you shall seek to enter in and shall not be able."—But does not this declaration militate against the general promise delivered also by Christ, "Seek and ye shall find?" Does it not contradict that other general declaration of our Lord's, "He that seeketh findeth?" My brethren, the Scriptures cannot disagree. Wherever they appear to differ, the difference is in appearance only. The assertion in the text must be understood, not in an absolute, but in a qualified sense. We are told of some, who "ask and receive not because they ask amiss."* The persons, spoken of in the text, "seek and find not," because they "seek amiss." They pursue not the object of their search by such means, or in such ways, as are necessary to ensure success. Their failure and disappointment are to be ascribed to the defective and inadequate manner in which they seek the attainment of their wishes. Let some of the principal causes of their failure and disappointment be stated and explained.

1. One obvious reason, why many seek to enter in and are not able, is that they seek not in the "appointed way." Nothing is more explicitly revealed in Scripture, than that there is but one way, one entrance into heaven. Hear what Christ saith: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.—I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."† Hear what the Baptist saith: "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him."‡ Such is the way prescribed. Should any, in neglect, in rejection of this way, seek to enter in by some other door; can we wonder, that they are not able? Yet what numbers are guilty of this folly! What numbers, setting at naught this Corner-Stone, this one Foundation, which God has laid in Zion, place their ground-work, and erect their building on the sand! What numbers seek by their obedience, by their almsgiving, by their useful lives, by their amiable tempers to procure an en-

* James, iv. 3. † John, xiv. 6. x. 9. ‡ John, iii. 36.

trance into heaven? These things, indeed, in their proper place, are essential to salvation. They are the ornaments of the Christian profession: the proper fruits and evidences of an interest in Christ. But they are not *Christ*. They cannot supply the want of an interest in him. They cannot reconcile us unto the Father; nor obtain for us the gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify our heart. They are in truth the *consequences*, which flow from reconciliation; they are the *effects* of the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Spirit; nor till we are reconciled to God by faith in the blood of his Son; till we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works; can we bring forth any fruit acceptable to God. Pardon and a new heart must in a guilty and a corrupt creature precede the performance of good works. How absurd then, how preposterous is the attempt to seek salvation by our own works to the exclusion of Christ! Such an attempt, from the very nature of things, must terminate in disappointment. St. Paul, in the most pointed manner, has exposed the futility of such an attempt, the certainty of such disappointment. "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling stone."* Surely such as tread in Israel's steps, will share Israel's doom. Such as with them seek the law of righteousness, not by *faith*, but as it were by the *works of the law*, with them will fail of attaining to the law of righteousness. Such as with them stumble at the stumbling stone, may seek to enter in, but will not be able.

2. Another cause of that disappointment, which many will experience, is the "unseasonable time," at which they commence the attempt of entering in at the Strait Gate. They make no preparation for the coming of the Bridegroom, till his approach is actually announced. They omit to procure oil for their lamps, till the opportunity of procuring it is lost. They knock not for admission, till the door is shut. Men begin to seek, when it is too late to find. Long have they lived in a state of criminal indifference to the things of God, or of presumptuous security with respect to their eternal interests, or of an hypocritical profession of religion.

* Rom. ix. 32.

Long have the loving-kindness and forbearance of the Almighty been extended towards them. Long has he waited for them, "rising early and speaking." But they have hearkened not. "They have set at nought all his counsels, and would none of his reproofs." Deaf to the voice of conscience and of the Scriptures, they have followed the devices of their own heart, and, without restraint or apprehension, have run their mad career. At length, however, their sin has found them out. Disease, the harbinger of death, has seized upon their frame. The prospect of speedy dissolution has torn away the vail which obscured their sight. Awakening out of sleep, they now perceive their guilt and danger. With bitter self-reproaches they look back upon the past; with overwhelming horror they anticipate the future. The vanity of the world, the value of the soul, the importance of eternity, the inconceivable blessedness of peace with God, are truths, which now fasten on the mind with irresistible conviction. How gladly would they now participate that blessedness! How gladly would they now improve their few remaining hours in laboring to secure an entrance into heaven! But what probability of success awaits their labor? What qualification do they possess for the important undertaking? Debilitated by sickness, distracted with pain, incapable of the slightest mental exertion, incapacitated for performing the most trivial work, what ability do they retain for completing, for commencing a work, at all times most difficult and arduous, now rendered doubly so by the length of time, for which it has been delayed, by the shortness of the period, which is left for accomplishing it? They *seek* indeed to enter in, but they are *not able*. They resolve; they promise; they vow; they "howl upon their beds:"* till death terminates the awful scene, and consigns them with all their unpardoned sins to that "outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."—God forbid! that in exhibiting this gloomy representation of a death-bed repentance, I should plant one additional thorn in the pillow of the expiring sinner! God forbid! that I should limit the mercy of the Almighty, or under-rate the riches of his grace! I know that his power is sufficient to cleanse the foulest heart, to grant repentance to the most obstinate offenders. I believe that *some* are called even at the eleventh hour

* Hosea, vii. 14.

into the vineyard of the Lord ; and, being snatched at that late period like brands out of the fire, are made illustrious monuments of the sovereign efficacy of redeeming love. But truth compels me to state the conviction which I also entertain, that *many*, who, till the prospect of death excites their fears and rouses their exertions, have never sought an entrance into heaven, will never find admission thither. Such is the conclusion which the whole tenor of the Scriptures warrants us to form. Such is the conclusion, which the following awful declaration strikingly confirms. “ Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.—I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer : they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”*

3. Another reason why many will fail in their attempt of obtaining admission into heaven, is the *irresolute* and *indecisive manner* in which that attempt is prosecuted. They are not ignorant of the appointed way of salvation. They do not designedly procrastinate in their spiritual concerns. They profess and they intend to seek the kingdom of God. But they do not seek it *first*. Religion is not with them the One Thing Needful. It is not the primary object of pursuit. It maintains at the best a divided empire in the heart. Their convictions are weak and fluctuating. Their desires are languid. Their obedience is partial and reserved. They “ do many things gladly ;” but they cast not aside “ every weight.” They follow the Lord, but they do not follow him *fully*. Will some heavy loss be incurred, will some severe trial be sustained, by a steady perseverance in the path of duty ? They turn a little to the right hand or to the left. Does the fascinating voice of pleasure allure them to her way ? They remit for a season their exertions in the way of holiness. Can they advance their worldly interests by removing to a place less favored with the means of grace ? They readily relinquish their religious advantages. Perhaps the persons described are distinguished by an attention to the duties of the Sabbath. Great is the ardor, which they manifest in frequenting public ordinances. With indefatigable zeal they hasten from one place of worship to another. Throughout the day the care of the soul appears to occupy

* Prov. i. 24. 26. 28.

the first place in the heart. Throughout the remainder of the week does the same care decidedly predominate? Does the general tenor of their lives evince the same apparent earnestness after heavenly things? Alas! No. The ardor terminates with the day. The zeal, instead of being strengthened, is evaporated by the very services in which it has been employed. Follow these persons to their houses. There no family-worship is regularly maintained: no religious instruction of children and dependents is systematically pursued. Attend them to the closet. There the exercise of private prayer is either altogether omitted, or carelessly performed. Accompany them to the counting-house, or to the senate: observe them in the discharge of their professional occupations. The same principles, by which the world, that knows not God, is governed, are recognized and obeyed. Look into the heart. There unmortified passions, there unsubdued tempers are suffered to retain dominion, and to reign without control.—Such is the irresolute and indecisive manner, in which many pursue eternal things, and aim to secure a portion in the heavens. We cannot be surprized, that they should ultimately fail in their attempt. We cannot be surprized, that thus seeking to enter in they should not be able.

These are some of the principal causes of that disappointment, which many, in the momentous concern of their soul, will experience. Let us now advert to the manner, in which the two particulars, that have been discussed, elucidate the meaning and the importance of the admonition in the text. When our Lord enjoins us, ‘Strive to enter in;’ in other words, the injunction, which he delivers, is this: ‘Strenuously contend with those difficulties, which obstruct your entrance into heaven. They are great; they are formidable. Your utmost efforts will be requisite for surmounting them. Resist those corrupt passions, those depraved inclinations, which, unless overcome, will destroy the soul. Subdue pride. Mortify sin. Lay the axe to the root of the tree. Submit to the humbling truths of the Gospel. Follow its holy precepts. Be the meek and penitent disciples of a crucified Redeemer; who is the author of eternal salvation to all them, that obey him. Take warning by the numerous examples of those, who, notwithstanding their endeavors, fall short of the heavenly glory. Shun the rocks

on which they split. Seek not as they seek.—Seek “in the appointed way.” Let Christ be your only foundation, your only hope. Look to him only for pardon, for righteousness, for wisdom, for sanctification, for eternal life. Strive in his strength, in reliance on his mercy, in dependence on his promises.—Seek “in an acceptable time.” Procrastinate not in so momentous a concern. Defer not your repentance till to-morrow. You know not what to-morrow may bring forth. “Now is the acceptable time: now is the day of Salvation.—To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart.—Seek with all your might.” Be resolute. Be decisive. Set your face steadily towards Zion. Press forward in the path of duty. Turn not to the right hand, or to the left. Attempt not to serve God and Mammon. Walk in *all* the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Labor to enter into his rest. “So run that ye may obtain.”

Such is the comprehensive meaning, such the vast importance of the admonition under review. Can any arguments, my brethren, be necessary to induce your compliance? May the following considerations quicken and invigorate your exertions!

Consider the “Magnitude of the object,” for which you are exhorted to strive. It is the life of your soul. It is happiness beyond conception great, boundless in extent, endless in duration. It is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens. It is the “salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.” Surely this is an object, the attainment of which demands your most vigorous efforts: an object, for the attainment of which you cannot encounter too many difficulties, you cannot endure too many privations. Shall the men of this world toil and labor, shall they “rise up early, and late take rest,” that they may join field to field, add house to house, and procure to themselves some little increase of earthly wealth or honor? Will you not labor that you may secure to yourselves treasures in heaven, that you may appropriate the honor which cometh from God? Admit that the gate is strait. Admit that through much tribulation you must enter into the kingdom of God. Yet the joys of that kingdom will abundantly compensate for the tribulations through which you have passed. Does Paul, in the fruition of “the

crown of righteousness," regret the conflict which he endured to obtain it? Does he now lament, that he "so run, not in uncertainty: that he so fought, not as one that beateth the air: but that he kept his body under, and brought it into subjection: lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should have been cast away?"* My brethren, look more at the things which are not seen. Contemplate the Rest that remaineth for the people of God. Strive to enter in.

Consider the *Consequences* of not complying with this admonition. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."† If you do not strive to enter in, you will infallibly be excluded. Your hopes, however sanguine they may be, will assuredly terminate in disappointment. You may plead your profession of Christ's Religion; you may urge your attendance on his ordinances, but the luke-warm professor and the slothful servant will be alike rejected, as workers of iniquity. Think what will then be the anguish of your heart, when seeking to enter in, ye shall not be able: when standing without, and knocking at the door, ye cry, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer, I know you not, whence you are! Think what weeping and gnashing of teeth there will be, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out! And *whither*, my brethren, will ye be thrust? When Christ commands you to depart from him, *whither* will ye be driven? Remember, that there is no middle state. If you obtain not admission into the glorious mansions of the blessed, you will for ever be assigned to the regions of misery and despair, prepared for the devil and his angels. There will you lift up your eyes, being in torments. There will you experience the additional anguish of reflecting, that you have been excluded from those mansions, that you have incurred those torments, through your own irresolution and neglect. Heaven might have been ours: but we foolishly trifled with the opportunity vouchsafed to us. We *sought* to enter in, but we did not *strive*. We desired the blessing, but we did not wrestle for it. We made some efforts, but we did not exert sufficient strength. Had we but labored to secure an heavenly inheritance, as earnestly as we labored to obtain

* 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

† Matt. xi. 12.

a portion in the world, we had not come into this place of torments.'—Spare yourselves these bitter self-reproaches, these unavailing lamentations. *Work* while it is day. While there is time, *labor* for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life. Be not weary in well-doing. In due time you shall reap, if you faint not. For,

Consider, lastly, the *certainty of success*, which awaits your compliance with the admonition. "Your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." Strive, and ye shall enter in. Though the difficulties be formidable, you shall be able to surmount them. Though the gate be strait, you shall obtain admission. Though in yourselves you possess no strength for the arduous conflict : yet be not dismayed. In the way prescribed, in the exercise of prayer, in dependence on the grace of Christ, contend with earnestness against every enemy, and he shall give you strength. At the command of Jesus, the man endeavored to stretch forth his withered hand ; and in the very act of endeavoring to obey the precept, received power to obey it. At the command of Jesus, strive ye to enter in at the strait gate, and you shall not strive in vain. You shall be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. You shall have power to overcome every intervening obstacle. You shall be enabled to endure unto the end. So "shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

SERMON L.

The Marks of True Faith, stated and explained.

2 CORINTHIANS, xiii. 5.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith : Prove your ownelves.

THERE is no truth more clearly stated in Scripture, than that *Faith* is indispensably necessary to salvation. We are expressly told, that "without Faith it is impossible to please God ;" that "by grace we are saved through Faith ;" that "he who believeth not is condemned already ;" and that "all unbelievers shall have their portion in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone." At the same time it is no less clearly stated, that "all men have not faith." If we read of some, who "believe to the saving of their souls," we hear also of others, who "have an evil heart of unbelief : " who "concerning faith have made shipwreck : " who, because "the God of this world hath blinded their minds, believe not."—While such are the representations of the word of God, who does not perceive the importance of St. Paul's admonition in the text, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith : prove your ownelves ?"

In urging the Corinthians to institute this inquiry into their state, the apostle probably was apprehensive, that there might be among them some who were deceiving themselves by a false shew of religion ; who, while they assumed the title of believers, had really no just pretensions to the character. To such persons, the examination prescribed might be attended with incalculable benefit. By disclosing to them the insincerity of their Christian profession, it would destroy their vain confidence ; and thus, through the divine blessing, might eventually lead them to build their hopes on a less dangerous foundation.

There might be others, also, to whom a compliance with the apostle's exhortation would be highly profitable. There

might be persons who entertained considerable, though needless fears of their interest in the Redeemer; persons, who in fact possessing unequivocal evidences of a true and living Faith, yet, from want of duly investigating them, continued to class themselves with unbelievers, and formed the most gloomy conclusions concerning their spiritual state. Let these persons, however, be persuaded to "examine themselves, whether they be in the faith;" let them "prove their own selves." What will be the result of such an inquiry? Convinced that their fears are groundless, their conclusions unreasonable, they will cast aside their despondency, and will "go on their way rejoicing."

But were characters of these descriptions to be found only in the times of the apostle? Doubtless they are to be found in all ages. Doubtless the admonition may be as profitably applied in this, as in any preceding age of the church, for the purposes of detecting the self-deceiver, and of administering strength and consolation to the weak and afflicted Christian.

Such is the application which I design to make of this admonition. In prosecuting the design, I shall address,

I. Those, who assert that they have Faith.

II. Those, who fear that they have not Faith.

And may that Holy Spirit, who only can discover to the heart its errors; or can shine upon his own work of grace in the soul, bless the discussion of this momentous subject to the conviction, or to the comfort of all concerned!

I. My brethren, you assert that you have Faith. Far is it from my intention to deny the assertion. God grant that it may be true! But I would wish to suggest the possibility of its being false. You may possibly be deceived in the sentiments which you entertain of yourselves. You may possibly think more favorably of your state, than in reality you ought to think. What conduct then does wisdom prescribe? In a matter on which consequences so important to your everlasting interests are suspended, it warns you to proceed with caution. While a possibility exists of your being mistaken, where a mistake must be attended with irretrievable ruin; it warns you to pause, before you decidedly form your opinion; to investigate with attention the grounds on which your conclusion is built. Your edifice, if it be founded on a rock, will not be less secure, because you

shall have examined the foundation : and your confidence will be proportionally augmented by the conviction, thus acquired, of its firmness and stability.—Suffer me then to propose some leading topics for your serious examination.

1. Are your *views* of Faith correct and Scriptural?—Such views indeed are not essential to the attainment of Faith. You may have attained to True Faith, though you may neither distinctly conceive, nor be able accurately to define it. You cannot however *know* that you have attained to it, without having formed some just apprehensions respecting it. In examining yourselves, “whether ye be in the faith,” unless you have ascertained what True Faith is, you cannot arrive at any satisfactory conclusion on the subject.

What then are your views of the *object* of Faith? Faith in general has respect to the word of God. Every revelation of the Divine Will is in truth the *object* of Faith. But the Faith, of which we particularly speak, is the Faith of the Gospel. Of this Faith the object is Christ crucified, the Lamb of God, who, by the sacrifice of himself, takes away the sin of the world. This was the object, to which, as the predicted seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, the saints before the flood looked forward. This was the object, which, as the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Abraham and the Patriarchs by Faith contemplated. This was the object at which all the legal sacrifices pointed : the object, which the spiritual worshippers, under the Jewish dispensation, regarded as the completion and the substance of their types and shadows. This is the object, which is now fully revealed by Faith in the preaching of the cross : Jesus the Son of God ; the Propitiation for our sins ; our Advocate with the Father ? “ of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

What are your views of the *importance* of Faith? Nothing is more plainly asserted in Scripture, than the vast importance of Faith. Eminently distinguished is the office assigned to it in the work of redemption. Through Faith we are saved. By Faith we obtain remission of sins. By Faith we are justified, and are brought into peace and favor with God. By Faith we are sanctified. Faith is, in truth, that instrument, by which our union with Christ is

accomplished and preserved ; by which, consequently, our interest in all the blessings of the Gospel is secured. By Faith we are grafted into this the True Vine. By Faith we are made living members of his body. By Faith we maintain our spiritual communion with him, and out of his fulness derive an adequate supply of grace and strength in every time of need.

What are your views of the nature of Faith ? Faith in Christ is not merely a belief of the facts recorded in Scripture concerning him. Such an *historical faith* many of his most inveterate enemies have frequently entertained. Neither does the Faith in question consist in a bare assent of the understanding to the mysterious doctrines of the Gospel. *In this sense*, the devils themselves believe in Christ : for they know him to be the Holy One of God. A belief of the facts recorded concerning Christ, and an assent of the understanding to the mysterious doctrines of the Gospel, are indeed preparatory steps towards a True Faith. But they are only *preparatory* steps : and the man who advances no further, will fail of attaining to the True Faith of the Gospel. This Faith is an assent, not merely of the understanding, but of the heart. It is a cordial acquiescence in the revealed method of salvation, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. It is an appropriation to our own case of the suitableness and of the sufficiency of redemption ; an affiance on the mercy and the merits of the Saviour. Faith in Christ is described by " coming unto him " for pardon, for grace, for holiness, for life : by " receiving him " as our Prophet, Priest, and King. It is represented by the significant action of " looking unto him " lifted up on the cross, as the wounded Israelites looked on the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, with an eye of penitence and humble hope.

What are your views of the *origin* of Faith. As Faith is not merely a belief of facts, nor a bare assent of the understanding, so neither is it the work and offspring of the human mind. Not evidences the most perspicuous and multiplied, not arguments the most powerful and convincing, not demonstration itself, can produce Faith. Faith is a divine work : a creation in the heart by the Spirit of Christ. The Faith through which we are saved, is " not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Those who believed in Achaia are expressly said to have " believed through grace," St. Paul

comforts the Philippians with the assurance, that it had been given to them to believe. The same apostle tells the Colossians, that the Faith by which they were risen to newness of life, was "of the operation of God." Nay, he reminds the Ephesians, that the power by which they were enabled to believe, was the same "mighty power which God had wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."*

Do your views of Faith accord with these Scriptural statements? Is such the object, the importance, the nature, the origin of that Faith, which you profess to have obtained? If in any of these respects it differs from the Faith described: if it looks not to the sacrifice and the righteousness of Christ for its object: if in your scheme of Christian doctrine it occupies not that *high and distinguished* place, which it justly claims: if in its *nature* it amounts not to a cordial reliance on the promised mercy of God through the Saviour; if it derives its *origin* from the efforts of your own natural powers; and is not exclusively the gift and the work of God: in all, or in any of these cases, you have reason to suspect that your Faith is not the Faith of the Gospel. You have reason to suspect, that in assuming the character of a believer in Christ, you are imposing a dangerous falsehood on yourselves, and have yet to learn True Faith.

2. Have you *prayed* for Faith? Have you made the creation or the increase of Faith in your heart the subject of earnest supplication at the throne of grace? Prayer is one of the appointed, one of the most efficacious means of procuring to ourselves spiritual blessings. God, indeed, who is more ready to give than we to ask, may confer them on us without the intervention of prayer on our part. But unless we pray, we have no warrant to expect that we shall receive: for the promise of receiving is given to them that ask. If then you have failed to pray for Faith, you have cause to apprehend that you may not have yet received it. And with the *views* which you profess to entertain of Faith, can you have neglected to pray for it? What? Professing to admit the *importance* of Faith, professing to admit that Faith is the *gift* and the *work* of God alone, have you omitted fervently to beseech him, that He would confer on you grace to believe? How does such an omission accord with these profes-

* Ephes. ii. 8. Acts, xviii. 27. Phil. i. 29. Col. i. xii. Ephes. i. 19, 24.

sions? How can you reconcile these views of Faith with a neglect of those means by which it may assuredly be obtained?—Consider, further, that prayer is the very breath of Faith. Faith will necessarily teach you to pray; and for nothing will it urge you more importunately to pray, than for its own increase. One of the first effects, which a little Faith received into your heart will produce, is a discovery of your need of more. Having once experienced its quickening and potent energy in the soul, you will anxiously desire a larger communication of this heavenly principle: while under the influence of this desire, you will earnestly pray with the apostles, “Lord, increase our Faith.” Say, my brethren, is such your experience, your desire, your prayer? “Prove your own selves.”

8. Do you possess those marks with which True Faith is accompanied? The tree is known by its fruits. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” Distinguishing are the marks with which True Faith is accompanied.

It is accompanied with “exalted notions of the Saviour.—To them which believe he is precious.” They have discovered his value, and their need of him. They have found in him a suitableness to their necessities; a fulness, a sufficiency commensurate to their utmost wants. They are unable to save themselves. In Christ they behold a Saviour, divinely appointed to the office, and completely qualified for the performance of it. They owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. Christ offers to discharge the debt, to cancel the bond. They are struggling with a disease incurable by human means. Christ undertakes to provide a remedy, and to heal their souls. In themselves they are unrighteous and without strength. In Christ is righteousness and strength. With what feelings then do they regard him? With feelings of admiration, of desire, of devout affection. “They rejoice in Christ Jesus.” He is the source and object of all their joy. In every picture of happiness, which they paint to their imagination, an interest in Christ constitutes the most prominent feature. How forcibly does St. Paul represent this to have been the state of his mind; when he declares that he “counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord:” that he “suffered the loss of all things, that he

might win Christ, and be found in him !” * And how frequently does the apostle labor for expressions, and even exhaust language in attempting to depict his high and admiring sentiments of Jesus Christ ? Are such then, my brethren, your sentiments of Jesus Christ ? Are these the exalted notions, which you entertain of him ? Is He in your eyes “ The One Thing needful, The Pearl of great price ;” for which you are ready to suffer the loss of all things ? Do you prize the knowledge of Him, and an interest in Him, above all other considerations ? Have you this evidence of Faith in Him, that you account him *precious* ?

Faith is accompanied with “ humbling thoughts of ourselves.” The very idea of coming unto Christ for pardon and holiness, presupposes and implies an heart-felt conviction of our own guilt and depravity. Why should we be depending on the righteousness of another, if we did not feel that we have no righteousness of our own ? Why should we be looking to another to cleanse and heal us, if we did not find that we are unclean, and unable to heal ourselves ? With such a conviction, with such an experience of our unrighteousness, of our impurity, and of our weakness, we cannot be lifted up with pride and self-sufficiency. We cannot talk or think highly of ourselves. We cannot despise others. Faith necessarily excludes all boasting. Faith in Christ, from the very nature of things, must inseparably be united with deep humiliation, and self-abasement. Whose attainments in Faith and holiness were greater than St. Paul’s ? But observe the language in which he speaks of himself and of his pretensions. “ Of sinners I am chief : one born out of due time, not worthy to be called an apostle : one in whom Christ hath shewn forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to those which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” Such, in respect to himself, were the sentiments of this eminent apostle. Are such, my brethren, in respect to yourselves, *your* sentiments ? Have you utterly renounced your own righteousness ? Are you self-condemned before God ? Is pride dethroned in your heart ? Does humility, genuine humility, reign within ? In lowliness of mind do you esteem others better than yourselves ?

* 1st II. iii. 8.

Faith is accompanied with "hatred and mortification of sin." Faith is an holy principle, and cannot therefore but be productive of holiness. We are expressly told, that "Faith worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world." Holy tempers, holy desires, holy affections, flow from true Christian Faith as naturally as pure waters are emitted from a pure fountain. Sinners cannot believe in a crucified Redeemer, and not be filled with hatred of sin; of sin, which nailed that Redeemer to the cross. They cannot view the exhibition there displayed of the evil, the malignity, the enormity of sin, and not resolve to renounce and mortify it. Advert to the testimony of the same apostle, to whom reference has been already made. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.—They walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. By the cross of Christ the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Here then is another ground for diligent research. Have you *this* Mark of Faith? Do you hate and mortify sin? Have you renounced the hidden things of darkness? Is not secret iniquity allowed or practised? Do you walk honestly as in the day? Does your Faith prove itself genuine by bringing forth the fruits of holiness, by teaching you to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?"

Such are the leading topics for serious examination, which on this important subject I would propose. Are you enabled, after the due investigation, satisfactorily to reply to these inquiries? Give to God the glory. Ascribe the praise to Him, who hath "called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Rejoice that you are made "partakers of precious faith." Rejoice however with trembling. Be not high minded, but fear. Conclude not "as though you had already attained, either were already perfect. Count not yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before; press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance and; to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you

and abound, they make you; that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Does conscience on this inquiry testify against you? Do you now discover, that you have been hitherto building on a false foundation? Be thankful that the discovery has been effected while yet there is time to rectify the error. Remember that Faith is “of the operation of God.” Pray then for grace to believe. Pray that this holy principle may be planted in your heart: that by the word you may be “begotten again unto a lively hope.—Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

II. I proceed to address those who fear that they have not Faith.

Your case, my brethren, is very different from that which has been discussed, and demands a very different treatment. Instead of asserting that you have Faith, you lament your want of it. You complain of the hardness of your heart, and bitterly deplore your unbelief. Now, in the commencement of this subject, let me observe, that such complaints, such lamentations, carry in themselves a presumptive evidence, that there is no substantial ground for their existence. They decisively prove your strong conviction of the importance, they intimate at least your earnest desire after the attainment, of Faith: a conviction and a desire, which, when really felt, are far from countenancing a supposition that Faith itself is wanting. The inference, which they rather tend to justify, is one of a totally opposite complexion. Your very fear itself almost warrants an exhortation to dismiss your fear.

But let us investigate the causes of you fear. Let the reasons which induce you to form such an unfavorable opinion of your state be specified and examined. An examination may expose their futility, and may shew that your conclusions are erroneous and unfounded.

1. You complain, perhaps, that ‘you have no comfortable experience of your acceptance in the Beloved; that you feel not that full and firm persuasion of your interest in Christ, with which True Faith would be attended.’ This is no uncommon subject of complaint with those, who bewail their unbelief. But where, I would ask, have you been

* Phil. iii. 13, 14. Peter, i. 5, 6, 7, 8.

taught the necessity of a comfortable experience of your acceptance in the Beloved? Whence have you derived the knowledge, that True Faith would certainly be attended with a full and firm persuasion of your interest in Christ? The Scriptures neither maintain nor encourage any such position. They speak indeed of "a good hope through grace," of "a strong consolation," of "the assurance of Faith;" but they speak not of these things as being so essentially interwoven with the nature of Faith, as that Faith cannot exist without them. My brethren, you are confounding together two things, which have no indispensable, no necessary connection with each other. That "love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit, which He has given us;" that "witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit, that we are the children of God;" that "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" are privileges, which frequently accompany Faith: privileges, the attainment of which is highly conducive to our peace, to our usefulness, to our perseverance and activity in well-doing: privileges, therefore, which we cannot too highly value, or too anxiously seek. But is Faith not Faith, unless accompanied with these privileges? Does even the total absence of them prove, that Faith is absent also? Harbor not such unscriptural sentiments. The true believer often "walketh in darkness and seeth no light." Clouds frequently obscure his prospects, and prevent him from beholding his interest in redeeming love. But this circumstance makes no real alteration in his state. He is not the less a true believer, because he is destitute of a lively experience, that he is so. The stability or the unsoundness of his pretensions to that character are not to be ascertained by his frames and feelings, by the exaltation or depression of his spirits. The reality of his Faith rests on very different grounds, and is to be tried by proofs of a very different kind. So far then as this objection is concerned, lay aside your apprehensions. Exclude not yourselves from the promises of the Gospel for a reason, for which the word of God excludes you not.

2. You alledge, it may be, as a decisive evidence of your want of Faith, the imperfect and fluctuating nature of that trust, which you exercise in the Saviour. 'Did we really believe in Christ, our reliance on him would be complete and permanent. We should fully embrace his offered mer-

cy : we should maintain an unshaken, an uninterrupted confidence in his promises. But far otherwise is the case with us. Though we cannot disbelieve his power, we yet greatly distrust his willingness to save us. And if at times a ray of light does break in upon our paths ; if occasionally we do conceive some clearer and more distinct idea of our dependence on this rock : yet the impression is speedily effaced. The first recollection of our sins destroys the illusion, undermines our airy fabric, and plunges us again into all the horrors of uncertainty and doubt.* My brethren, this subject of complaint originates, like the former, in mistake. You overlook that obvious scriptural distinction respecting the degrees of Faith. Faith is not always strong or great : nor does its existence depend merely on these qualities. We read of *weak* and of *little* Faith ; and though the largest measure of this grace should be the object of our earnest desire and pursuit ; yet let us remember that the smallest portion of it in itself is saving, and infinitely valuable. It was indeed great Faith, which called forth our Lord's commendation. But the efficacy of this heavenly principle, though in its *feeblest* exercise, is signally attested by him. " If ye have Faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place ; and it shall remove : and nothing shall be impossible unto you."† Despise not then " the day of small things," since God despiseth it not. Deem not, because you are not possessed of great Faith, that you have no Faith at all. Faith, though it be little, still is Faith ; and, as such, still interests you in all the gifts and privileges of the Gospel.—You object against yourselves the *defective* nature of your dependence on Christ. While you believe that he is *able*, you cannot believe that he is *willing* to save you. Advert to the instance of the leper, who, under a similar state of mind, preferred his petition to Christ, " Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."‡ What reception did he encounter ? He was not rejected as an unbeliever. He was not upbraided for his want of Faith. Jesus in the very application to himself saw the latent principle, which operated within ; and, overlooking its imperfect exercise, with admirable condescension shewed, that his willingness to save was not inferior to his power. " I will : be thou clean."—Your complaint of

* Matthew, xvii. 20. † Matthew, viii. 2, 3.

the *fluctuating* nature of your dependence on the Redeemer. But is it really so fluctuating, as you apprehend it to be? You may not have at all times an equally lively sense of your dependence on Christ. But even in your darkest moments have you any other dependence? At such seasons do you trust to your repentance for the atonement of your sins? Do you rely on your own righteousness for acceptance with God? Do you confide on the strength, or the sincerity, of your own resolutions? Do you feel that Christ is unnecessary for your salvation? No. These sentiments you reject with abhorrence. Your conviction remains unshaken, that Christ only can accomplish your salvation. You are assured, that if you are saved at all, it must be through his merits, his grace, his intercession. But while such is your conviction, while such is your assurance, can you reasonably lament, that your dependence *fluctuates*? Dismiss this cause of lamentation. Your foundation, though less plainly discerned, is still the same. Jesus-Christ is still the rock on which your building, however imperceptibly, stands: and winds and waves shall assault the edifice in vain.

3. You complain of the inadequate and unworthy sentiments, which, you entertain of Christ. "If we had Faith in Christ, our sense of his worth and excellence would operate powerfully on our minds. Our love towards him would be strong and ardent. Praise and adoration would be the constant language of our heart. How clearly does the cold and lifeless state of our affections evince our unbelief!" Doubtless, my brethren, Faith worketh by love. Doubtless it is the characteristic of true believers, that they love an unseen Saviour. But are your views of the proof and the expression of that love correct and scriptural? The love of Christ may occasionally excite the most lively and rapturous emotions. But such emotions form not the criterion, by which the existence and sincerity of our love is to be tried. Love may exist where the heart is a stranger to lively and rapturous sensations: while these are sometimes found where love is wanting. Search then for less equivocal evidences of your state. Conclude not that you are destitute of love to Christ, because you find not your bosom glowing with feelings of gratitude and joy. Is it not your fervent desire to love him with all your heart, and soul, and strength? Do you not prefer his service, his cause, his peo-

ple? Would you not start with horror at the proposition of wilfully deserting him for any other master? Should he say to you, as he said to his apostles, "Will ye also go away?"* would not you with them instantly reply, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life?" Is there any object, which in your serious judgment can be placed in competition with his favor? Is there any thing, which you would not cheerfully renounce, that you may win Christ and be found in him? Is it not your earnest, your constant prayer, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me?" If your heart accord with these inquiries, be not discouraged. Notwithstanding your gloomy apprehensions to the contrary, Christ is *precious* to you. He occupies the first place in your esteem, in your affections. In this respect your fears are groundless, your conclusions false.

4. One other plea remains to be discussed. You contend that you are still in a state of unbelief, because you feel the power of sin to be strong within you. Faith, you aver, would purify the heart, would deliver you from the bondage of corruption, would renew you to the divine image in righteousness and true holiness. But does not this complaint also arise from ignorance and error? Faith is indeed the seed of holiness: the seed, which, when once sown in the heart, will necessarily produce its correspondent fruits. But all contrary and opposing principles are not at once eradicated or supported. In the renewed heart sin is proscribed, dethroned, weakened; but not at present finally destroyed. The work of sanctification, like that of vegetation, is progressive. First appears "the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Grace may be with you in the blade. But the appearance of the blade as incontrovertibly proves the previous insertion of the seed, as even the full corn in the ear. If much remains to be accomplished before you can arrive at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, there may yet be evidences sufficient to evince, that the life of Faith is begun within you. Are you allowedly guilty of any known violation of the law of God? Is not sin your shame, your burden, your grief? Do you not incessantly struggle against its corrupt and secret workings in your heart? While your practice, your conversation,

* John, vi. 67, 68.

your tempers, are decidedly amended, do you not feel more real concern from the remaining opposition of sin, than you once felt from even your open, your allowed, and gross offences? Does not this sense of your depravity and weakness drive you unfeignedly to call upon Christ for help; that he would deliver you from the body of this death; would subdue your corruptions, and would sanctify you wholly in body, and soul, and spirit? My brethren, if you thus hunger and thirst after righteousness, Christ has pronounced you *blessed*. Class not then yourselves with unbelievers. If you were destitute of Faith, you would be destitute of spiritual feeling. You would not be sensible of the burden of sin, and consequently would not desire deliverance from it. That very conflict between the flesh and the spirit, which you assign as the proof of your unbelief, justly constitutes to others a decisive evidence of your Faith and interest in Christ.

Such are some of the probable causes of that despondency, which you profess to entertain in respect to your spiritual state. May the discussion of this subject be instrumental in removing them! But whether such be the effect produced, or not; whether your fears be needless, or well founded: whether they be speedily dispelled, or continue undiminished; still, in conclusion, let me earnestly remind you, that the Lord only, from whom alone every good and perfect gift doth come, can fill you with real peace and joy in believing. If at present you are destitute of Faith, He only can create it in you. If your Faith be weak and little, He only can strengthen and increase it. If clouds and darkness intercept your views, or cast a gloom over your prospects, He only can dissipate the mists, and cheer and illuminate your paths. Look then to the Lord for help. Be diligent in using the means, which He has appointed for the communication of spiritual blessings. Read the word. Meditate upon it. Be instant in prayer. Then shall ye know, if ye thus follow on to know the Lord. Should the object of your desires be for a time withholden, yet wait for it. "It will surely come, it will not tarry." Be not discouraged. Be not impatient. If the Lord keep you for a season in a state of suspense and anxiety; be assured, that he has wise, that he has merciful ends in this dispensation. He would stimulate your exertions. He would quicken your prayers. He would exercise your patience. He would

teach you submission to his will. He would for a short season delay the grant : that, when it comes, it may be more acceptable. He would abase you the lower, that hereafter you may be exalted the higher. He would impart to you a more experimental knowledge of his ways, that hereafter you may be better able to impart it to others. Let these reflections sustain and animate you. The Lord, when *his* time shall arrive, will wipe away every tear. He "will extend to you peace as a river." He will say to the troubled waves, "Be still;" and there will be a great calm. "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light; and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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